

The

OTHER SIDE

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL





THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA

BEQUEST OF

Alice R. Hilgard

Mari Louise Hilgert

From Mary

May 1911

THE OTHER SIDE

THE OTHER SIDE

BEING CERTAIN PASSAGES IN
THE LIFE OF A GENIUS

BY
HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL



HODDER & STOUGHTON
NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

Copyright, 1910
By George H. Doran Company

GIFT

11/2/10

955
V118
oth

TO
THE MEMORY OF
MY WIFE

M854283

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Prologue	3

BOOK I

CHAPTER

I.	The Vicar Entertains Misgivings	37
II.	Concerning Mary Pignerol	53
III.	The Fleshpots of Egypt	67
IV.	In the New Forest	87
V.	Solomon's Garden	98
VI.	Which Introduces Some Celebrities	121
VII.	David Crosses the Rubicon	135
VIII.	"The Peer and the Peri"	148
IX.	The Waters of Marah	164
X.	At the Archdale Arms	174
XI.	David Asks Questions	191
XII.	In the Month of May	208
XIII.	David Sees with Detachment	217

BOOK II

XIV.	On the Other Side	223
XV.	The Soul of a Child	244
XVI.	Mary's Voice	252

CONTENTS

BOOK III

CHAPTER		PAGE
XVII.	The Conditions	267
XVIII.	The Creed of a Happy Man	285
XIX.	Mollie Picks Up Stitches	297
XX.	Mollie Sees Two Roads	312
XXI.	In the Garden	325
XXII.	Through the Mists	333
XXIII.	The Awakening	346
XXIV.	The Heavenly Note	353

“And, in order to teach men how to be satisfied, it is necessary fully to understand the art and joy of humble life —this at present, of all arts and sciences, being the one most needing study. Humble life, that is to say, proposing to itself no future exaltation, but only a sweet continuance ; not excluding the idea of foresight, but wholly of foresorrow, and taking no troublous thought for coming days : so, also, not excluding the idea of providence, or provision, but wholly of accumulation ; — the life of domestic affection and domestic peace, full of sensitiveness to all elements of costless and kind pleasure ; — therefore, chiefly to the loveliness of the natural world.”—*John Ruskin.*

THE OTHER SIDE

PROLOGUE

WHICH DESCRIBES A LEAP IN THE DARK

DAVID was singing to himself, *pianissimo*, while he put away the scores used at the afternoon practice. Sebastian Fermor, tired after a long day's work, listened with half-shut eyes and a faint smile upon his face. Centuries ago — so it seemed — he had sung like this child, with freshness and spontaneity. Each note was articulate and produced without effort: a result of training. But the quality which challenged attention was an indescribable sweetness: a penetrating delicacy of tone, so sublimated of grossness and yet so vital, so dominant, that it could be heard above the voices of the full choir and the thunders of the organ. When enthusiastic spinsters acclaimed the boy's voice as "heavenly," the adjective appeared inevitable. And during many years Fermor had laboured to produce this "heavenly note" upon the organ by mechanical means. Those interested in such matters know what Fermor has done for that instrument, but his achievements were built upon failure. He had sought for a pearl of transcendent beauty, and so searching had found half a dozen gems of moderate lustre.

From beneath his eyelids he looked at David. Insensibly the lines upon his plain impassive face softened. A stranger with any powers of observation would have jumped to the conclusion that a father was gazing fondly at his son. Nor would this have evoked surprise, for the boy was so beautiful that the spinsters aforesaid apprehended his premature decease. Miss Rachel Callow, whom we shall meet presently, had said to her intimate friend, Caroline Jubber, the Vicar of Sherborne's daughter: "We cannot hope to keep the darling long!" Between the darling and these too fond ladies, Fermor had interposed his own personality. He disliked sugar, being a dispenser of salt. And when he discovered that the boy had a sense of humour, so rare in choristers, he felt easier in his mind. Once, after the nauseating experience of seeing the darling hugged by a dozen well-meaning but foolish virgins, more or less befuddled by too strong tea and emotional religion, he had said austere: "Don't let these women spoil you, David!" Whereupon, to his amusement, the urchin had responded with a wink of the eye and a gesture familiar to stewards upon Channel boats. But when Fermor laughed, the boy assumed the senior's austerity and said: "I suppose, sir, it's rot to talk of being spoiled. One spoils oneself, doesn't one?" And to this, Fermor replied: "Yes."

As he gazed at the boy, he was reflecting that the face matched the voice. Each had the "heavenly" quality. The eyes, in particular, set far apart and

shaded with thick dark lashes, exhibited the tint of a rain-washed sky, the true cobalt, impossible to reproduce as a pigment because of its perfect clarity. The brow, finely developed, added splendour to the eyes. Fermor, within five minutes of meeting David, had recognized perceptive faculties, and an intelligence which dazzled because it seemed to be concentrated upon what appealed most strongly to himself — Art. Without training, without experience, without the environment which is, perhaps, better than training or experience, the child revealed the artist.

Meanwhile, Fermor was considering physical rather than mental attributes. David's colouring was red, white, and blue: *Angelus et angelus*. Translating *angelus* as messenger rather than angel, Fermor had come to believe that the child had a message to deliver. And, if so, what? Of that he was not certain, although he asked the question often. He had no suspicion that it was about to be answered within a few minutes.

The lower part of the face held his glance. The symmetry of nose and chin and mouth, the modelling of the cheeks, the texture of the hair, indicated sensibility and refinement, but the lips a thought too full distracted attention from a chin obstinate rather than strong. For the rest, the body was slender, but finely proportioned.

A messenger of the Most High!

Detesting phrases, abhorring artificial sentiment, Fermor had condensed a score of nebulous speculations into those six words. The boy was charged with

a message, and he carried his credentials upon his face.

At this moment, Fermor's eyes closed. And, instantly, the notes of the child's voice penetrated to the core of his being. David kept on singing the same theme, as if obsessed by it. The theme did not appeal to Fermor; it was melodious and sugary, somewhat reminiscent of Gung'l or Strauss. The odd thing was that Fermor had never heard it before.

"What's that?" he asked.

"It's mine," said the boy.

He came forward, smiling.

"It's mine," he repeated. "Do you think it pretty?"

"It's pretty enough, too pretty, for that matter. You've been listening to a barrel organ."

"I was down by the river this morning, and it came into my head. I can't get it out. I didn't know I was singing it. Did it disturb you?"

"No. Sing it again!"

The boy laughed and obeyed. Fermor stood up.

"We'll see what Tweedledee says to it."

Tweedledee was the name of the ancient piano which stood open day and night in Fermor's room. Opposite to it was a harmonium, known as Tweedledum. Fermor played the theme, simply at first, and then with variations. He tried common time and waltz time. When he played waltz time, the boy danced. Fermor left the piano.

"Sing some other things of your own!"

"I can't. They come and go. I shall have forgotten this by to-morrow. "

"I shan't," said Fermor. "And look here, when these tunes come to you, you run to me, and I'll write 'em down — just for fun," he added hastily, having a nightmare vision of the delicate head swelled to monstrous proportions. He made a gesture of dismissal, and the boy went to the door. There, he paused shyly, fidgeting with his hands and feet.

"Mr. Fermor?"

"What is it?"

"Am I going to London?"

Fermor frowned, sensible that the question — asked daily for ten days — could not have been answered before. Now, he replied with finality:

"No."

The boy danced, his eyes radiated joy and thanksgiving.

"Hooray! I am glad."

"Why are you glad?"

"Because I shall stay here with you."

"There are thirty years between us. You like to be with me?"

He spoke gravely, trying to measure this immense gulf, and, measuring it, to bridge it with words. The boy's voice, as he answered, was as grave as the man's.

"I would sooner be with you, sir, than with any one else in the world."

Fermor was sensible of an emotion so poignant and yet so delightful that he flushed. The boy's

sincerity bridged the gulf. The pair met as equals upon friendship's highway. And yet an immediate difficulty presented itself. The boy's confession of friendship demanded a response, an acknowledgment of an affection hitherto suppressed.

"I have the same feeling for you, David," said Fermor slowly. "I wish that you were my son."

"I've never thought of you as a father."

He spoke in a hard voice. Fermor took his hand, and held it firmly. The boy's father had beaten him.

"Yes, yes; we are friends, pals. Let's leave it at that."

The boy smiled joyously, and went his way.

When he had gone, Fermor wrote down the air which the child had sung. Having dated it, he put the sheet of music into an envelope. Upon this he wrote: "First sample of ore from a promising mine." Then he filled his pipe and went back to his chair, where he sat for half an hour, thinking of the boy and his future. While he was thinking, the simple, pretty little air, so charmingly phrased, so delicately articulated, went flitting through his head, the accompaniment of his reflections. It became the medium through which the "message" was delivered. The boy might become a great composer. The possibility fired this quiet, self-effacing man, who realized that his interest in others was too lukewarm.

For some weeks a crisis had impended. Now it was passed. The boy had been offered a place in a

great London choir, and with it a liberal education. He was an orphan, dependent upon an aunt who belonged to the shifting population. At any moment she might leave Sherborne, taking the boy with her. In brief, the London offer was too good to be refused unless Fermor adopted the boy.

He had told himself that he must look well before he leapt into what the judicious might call a perilous experiment. But, perhaps, from the first he had known that he would leap, and that the marrow of the matter was the expediency of speech or silence concerning it. Of late years a habit of silence had imposed itself between Fermor and the people amongst whom he lived and laboured. Sherborne spoke slightly of the Abbey organist as odd. The ladies whispered to each other that he must be the hero of some romantic tale. Undoubtedly, one of their sex had treated shabbily a man whose chief claim to consideration was that he played the organ "divinely." The more sentimental interpolated romance into his music, which we will hasten to say was severely classical and ecclesiastical. A certain voluntary was pronounced by Miss Rachel Callow to be an autobiography. She was positive that Fermor's youth had been stormy, "*une jeunesse orageuse*," as she put it. Caroline Jubber, a woman of common sense, making allowance for the fact that dear Rachel fancied her French accent, admitted that Mr. Fermor might have undergone bludgeonings. But the Vicar, her father, who had coached Fermor at Oxford and

never lost sight of him since, denied this. The ladies were unanimous that Dr. Jubber was too discreet to tell all that he knew, and the phrase so often on his thin lips affirming his quondam pupil to be "one of the best" was salted and peppered in a dozen primly furnished drawing-rooms.

We will say at once that Fermor had no story, and that his youth had been exasperatingly blameless. There were moments when this oppressed him. He was a cadet of an ancient and impoverished Wessex family. A grandfather had distinguished himself at Trafalgar. One of the Fermors was said to have sailed the Spanish Main with Sir Walter Raleigh. In his robust flights of fancy, our friend imagined that latent in him lay a buccaneering strain. But this refused to exhibit itself to a conventional world even in his music. His father, some-time leader of the Philharmonic Society, had married late in life the daughter of an eminent organ-builder. When we add that Fermor was brought up to believe that John Sebastian Bach was the greatest man that had ever lived, we begin to get a better understanding of him. Before he was out of his teens, he was intimately acquainted with the works of Purcell, Boyce, and Tallis. And even at Oxford he spent more time with the old masters of ecclesiastical music than he did with the young misses who captivated his fellow undergraduates.

Physically ill-equipped for adventures in any field except that of Art, he had vaguely understood before

he was breeched that he was not so strong as other boys. Imperfect sight had made him a duffer at games; and his doctor had warned him that he could not undertake any violent form of exercise with impunity. Into Art he was driven under pressure of his father's ambition rather than his own. He had asked permission to enter the organ-building establishment, where, indeed, he spent some of the pleasantest hours of his life. After leaving Oxford his "Office for the Holy Communion," set to music in the key of D, aroused an expectation which succeeding compositions never justified. To be candid, his work was lacking in originality, and he knew it. He could write fugues that an amateur might mistake for those of John Sebastian; but a critic had said there was more Bach than bite in them. As a distraction from composition, he fell in love with the mechanism of the instrument, and at the time we make his acquaintance had patented two notable improvements. Surplus energy was expended upon the study of Gothic architecture; he had written two rather remarkable papers upon the correlation of colour, form, and sound.

Till he was forty an invalid mother stood between him and marriage. He provided a home for her, he played piquet with her every evening; he submitted smilingly to her tantrums. But when she died, he continued his celibate life, refusing invitations as before, discouraging, almost with rudeness, the advances of mothers with marriageable daughters.

Presently, the Vicar bustled in. Dr. Jubber exuded reform from every pore of his skin. And he scrubbed other folk's minds as vigorously as he scrubbed his own face. He was strong, and he exulted in his strength. He greeted Fermor in a deep vibrating voice, which poor old Tweedledee attenuated as if with a sigh.

"Are we going to keep little David Archdale?"

"I am."

The short crisp answer from a man whose darling sin, perhaps, was irresolution, took some of the wind from the Vicar's bellows. He sat down, staring at Fermor, and began to fill his pipe. Fermor and he were very old friends, but each was capable of misunderstanding the other: a fact which added zest to their intercourse.

"When you came in," continued Fermor, in the voice of a man who has never known what it is to feel fit at the end of a day's work, "I had just definitely decided to adopt the child."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Vicar.

"And if you are not in too great a hurry, I should like to talk the matter over."

"By all means. Isn't this a leap in the dark, Fermor?"

"Yes. That makes it — exciting."

"Exciting?" The Vicar stared at his organist, who had been his pupil. In a sense he was trying to visualize a man whom he had not met before.

"My life has been so unexciting. I am not com-

plaining, but to you I can admit that I hanker after excitement."

"Well, well, well!"

"You are astonished. It is almost as if we had changed places. You told me the last time you were here that a quiet life was beginning to charm you. It is beginning to bore me."

The Vicar cleared his throat, signaling that he was clearing his decks for action.

"My dear fellow, I am your senior by fifteen years. I have a wife and seven children. If you want excitement, marry! Why not?"

Fermor laughed, holding up his hands.

"I want excitement in small doses. And I have a singular prejudice against marriages of convenience."

"Pooh, pooh! You underrate yourself. However, I merely indicated a short cut to excitement. What do you mean by adoption?"

"Everything humanly possible. The boy has gifts denied to me. I have something which may be useful to him. He may accomplish my ambitions. I feel that I could begin again with him. And I want to begin again."

"But this means, if I know you, self-effacement."

"Pilots are not self-effacing persons. You are a sky-pilot, and I've never seen you look so happy as when you've come ashore after steering some cranky craft into harbourage."

"Tut, tut!" said the Vicar.

"I am speaking to you as I could speak to no other man. My disabilities have been a burden to me. I have always felt out of it: a looker-on. To-day, now that I am comparatively free, I should like to mix more with men and women. I know that I am standing in a circle which is diminishing, and that I am hemmed in with walls of my own building. You have done your best to rescue me, but even you have failed. This boy will soar — Oh! I use the word advisedly — and he will carry me with him."

"I see, but ——"

"You can say exactly what is in your mind."

"If you should be disappointed —? Take this boy up ——"

"But he is going to take me up."

"There you beg the question. Personally, I think he is a fine little fellow, with a voice which has materially increased our collections, but if you take him up and he does not take you up — if he should let you down? What then, my friend?"

Fermor hesitated.

"It's ten to one on the boy," he said drily. "And," he shrugged his shoulders, "if the thing was a certainty, where would be the excitement?"

"You feel a strong interest in him?"

There was a pause. When Fermor spoke his voice was not quite steady. Perhaps, in that one moment, he computed the sum total of those blessings which had not been vouchsafed to him.

"I wish he were my own son."

"What is his feeling toward you?"

But Fermor answered evasively: "He likes to be with me."

The Vicar rose.

"Obviously the matter is settled. I shall watch the experiment with keen interest and sympathy. You have your work cut out. The Devil will fight hard for that youngster."

"Why do you say that?"

The Vicar answered drily: "Because I knew his father. This will be a wrestling match between heredity and environment. I predict plenty of excitement, not now, but later."

"So be it," said Fermor.

Within a few minutes, he found himself walking with slightly accelerated pace toward a row of buildings situate in a part of Sherborne known as Cold Harbour, where David's maternal aunt, Miss Vawdrey, occupied genteel lodgings. Many abbey towns to which in the past the faithful made pilgrimage have Cold Harbours. Here, as the name implies, the poorer pilgrims found chill entertainment, a crust of bread and a glass of fair water. The small house, wherein Miss Vawdrey had found rooms, faced a high red-brick wall, carefully constructed to hide from the vulgar eye a charming house and garden. Sitting at her window, David's aunt was able to admire the beautiful tone of the bricks, and to reflect, possibly, that she was and must remain outside such pleasaunces as it enclosed. She painted miniatures badly, but her

prices were extremely moderate; and she never exasperated her clients by exacting long sittings. A photograph sufficed her, which she reduced to miniature size with the help of a neat apparatus designed for that purpose. Fermor reminded himself that Miss Vawdrey might refuse to part with her nephew, although gossip said that he was regarded by her as an encumbrance. She belonged — we have observed — to our floating population. To remain in one place meant sinking. In a town the size of Sherborne, rich in the possession of many well-to-do families, Miss Vawdrey might count upon exploiting at least fifty clients. When she left a good “pitch” she was wise enough never to return to it. We have her own word that, despite ill fortune, she remained a perfect lady.

Fermor rang the bell, which tinkled cheaply, as if it were sorry for itself. David opened the door, smiling seraphically when he saw his friend. But when Fermor asked for Miss Vawdrey, the imp winked — thereby ceasing to look like an angel — and whispered —

“She’s cross as two sticks.”

“Why?”

“I told her I wasn’t going to London, and she said that she would have something to say about that.”

Fermor nodded, writing himself down an ass. Of course, he ought to have spoken to the aunt first. Now, with the perversity of an injured woman, she might interpose obstacles.

The boy led the way out of a narrow dismal hall into a small sitting-room, characterized by Miss Vawdrey as the Studio. In the bow window, upon a table covered with red plush, were samples of her art, neatly and inexpensively framed. A cottage piano, back to the wall, stood opposite to a fireplace in which a crinkled cascade of tissue paper modestly revealed itself to the wondering eye. No flowers were to be seen except those upon the carpet. The furniture, too large for the room, and bought at public auction, was depressingly solid. Fermor told himself that it would endure for ever. Chromo-lithographs hung upon the walls. The boy, watching his friend, and vaguely conscious of a fall in the temperature, said hopefully: "Rather a jolly room, isn't it?"

Through the window, Fermor could see the insurmountable wall. He heard the boy saying: "Perhaps it doesn't look very jolly to you, but if you'd seen the rooms we had at Dorchester —— !"

"Please tell Miss Vawdrey that I am here."

Upstairs, the lady was adding a few touches to her toilet. She had seen Fermor approaching, and it was barely possible that he had come to commission a miniature, or to pay a fellow-artist a belated visit. Being what is euphemistically called a fine woman, she was sensible that she ought to appeal to a rather under-sized man. With deft fingers, she produced an impression of artistic negligence. Upon a billowy bosom, which an admirer had once compared favourably with that of Clytie, she pinned a bunch of violets;

her hair presented an appearance of ordered disorder; she was careful not to remove the pinafore in which she painted.

Then, smiling graciously, she descended.

Fermor greeted her stiffly. Miss Vawdrey prided herself upon being a daughter of Bohemia, and, in duologue with what she called "understanding persons," allowed herself a liberty of speech likely to be mistaken by Philistines for licence.

"Pop off, David!" she commanded, with a wave of an arm whose sleeve terminated at the elbow.

David vanished, but at the door he paused and winked for the third time on that memorable afternoon. The winks indicated a full acceptance of palship, and as such tickled the humour of our quiet friend, but they revealed also, startlingly, the nature of the relations between aunt and nephew. They said plainly: "You'll have larks with this rum old girl, and probably ructions!"

"Can I offer you a cigarette?" said Miss Vawdrey.

"No, thanks," said Fermor, glancing helplessly about him. His eye rested upon a large framed miniature.

"David's father," said Miss Vawdrey. "A very fine man — aristocratic looking, if I may say so."

"Very," murmured Fermor.

"When my poor sister died," she continued, "I promised to be a mother to David."

"I want to speak to you about him, Miss Vawdrey."

"Dear, dear! I hoped you had come about a

miniature. I should esteem it an honour to do your head, Mr. Fermor. Your eyes, you know, are very remarkable. I always say what I think. Positively, your eyes have haunted me."

Our unhappy friend blushed. His eyes were remarkable. They were gray, finely shaped, and heavily lidded, the lids half hiding the irids, except upon rare occasions. This physical peculiarity gave to the face a dreamy, suffused expression. The delicate arch of the eyebrow might have belonged to the poet Shelley.

"Dr. Jubber, I believe, laid before you the London offer?"

"Yes, he did," the lady replied tartly, "and he seemed to take it for granted that I should jump at it."

"It's an offer that one could hardly decline unless something better presented itself."

Miss Vawdrey's face hardened.

"Not an hour ago, David raced in here to tell me that he was not going. I have hardly been treated with courtesy, Mr. Fermor."

"I apologize. It's entirely my fault. Something better has turned up, and, very indiscreetly, I hinted as much to the child. Pray forgive me!"

"Not another word, I beg."

"The something better is this: a person of moderate means wishes to adopt David. He will charge himself with the boy's education, start him in some profession, and eventually provide for him."

"Indeed? Do I know this person, Mr. Fermor?"

"He is talking to you."

"You want to adopt David?"

"Yes."

Miss Vawdrey said majestically:

"Neither Dr. Jubber nor you seem to have considered me. I am the child's guardian, and his nearest living relation. For two years I have supported him. You talk of taking him from me as if it were a foregone conclusion that I should give him up."

Fermor, for the first time, raised his eyelids. His glance was penetrating and disconcerting, as any member of the Abbey choir could have testified.

"Dr. Jubber and I took for granted that you, as the boy's guardian, would consider what was best for him. When I engaged him to sing, you admitted that you were unable to pay anything toward his education. He has attended, I believe, the National School. You made me understand that your inability to afford a more liberal education was a grief to you."

"It is."

"Then again, the exercise of your own profession takes you from town to town, and each year the boy's expenses will increase."

"Unless he contributes something toward his own support."

"By singing in paid choirs?"

"By singing in public concerts. I'm not a fool, Mr. Fermor, and I happen to know that people are

raving about this boy. He's a draw. He's worth money, perhaps a lot of money."

"Within three years at most, probably before, his voice will break."

"Of course. But in three years he might earn enough to pay for even a better education than you could give him."

Fermor was silent.

"He's clever and handsome. He might make a hit on the stage."

She wriggled slightly beneath his steady glance, and then continued defiantly: "His mother was an actress. Perhaps you disapprove of the stage? Is your offer made out of pity?"

"No."

"You are almost a stranger to me."

"But not to the boy."

"David likes you. But he likes everybody who is kind to him, and most people are kind to him. If you adopt him, and, mind you, I don't say that I shall let him go, what do you expect to get out of it?"

"It's not easy to answer that question, Miss Vawdrey. I may get disappointment."

"If he grows up like his father, you will."

She spoke trenchantly. Fermor smiled, remembering what the Vicar had said. A fight — quite other than what he had anticipated — was already on his hands. And the excitement of it began to thrill his too stagnant pulses. He said with dignity —

"If I have treated you with any lack of considera-

tion, I am sincerely sorry. I have a personal interest in the matter, how personal I am not quite able to measure. I think I see in this child the makings of a genius. Long ago, I presumed to believe that I might do something myself, something worth while, but it has been ordered otherwise. I should like to see another profiting by my mistakes, avoiding the pitfalls which I could point out, reaching the goal which I shall never attain. If you will allow me, I shall try to make the running for David."

Her eyes fell. She was a hard woman, soured by the struggle to earn her bread, and sensible that for her, as for the man opposite, the colour of life was turning gray. She raised her head slowly, and saw the wall, to her the symbol of a mean and spiteful exclusiveness. Past the dingy little house, which she must soon leave for another just like it, or even more dreary, hurried the foot-passengers: men and women returning home after the day's work. For the most part they walked wearily, looking neither to right nor left, intent upon their own thoughts. Suddenly, she turned to Fermor, sitting silent before her.

"You are an artist," she said abruptly.

He made a deprecating gesture.

"Once I thought so. I call myself, to-day, an artisan."

"I am an artisan, you are an artist. To me, a true artist is one who would make sacrifices for Art, who, at a pinch, would subordinate his own ambitions for Art. I was never like that. And I never shall be.

Heavens! That I should confess it to you! Well, you have made an appeal to the miserable atom in me that is still artist. You can have the boy."

"Thank you. I shall try to justify the sacrifice on your part."

She laughed flippantly.

"My cards are face up on the table. I am not sorry to be relieved of a tedious responsibility. But I did want to get my knife into you and the Vicar. You've been too honest for me. All the same, I warn you that David is not the little angel which you and some idiotic women seem to think him."

Fermor laughed.

"Seriously, Miss Vawdrey, do you suppose that a humble person like myself would presume to undertake the care of an angel?"

"Seriously, Mr. Fermor, I think you are buying a pig in a poke, instead of a chorister from the heavenly choir. The boy's father was clever, good-for-nothing, a reckless sensualist who thought he married beneath him when he took my pretty sister from the boards of a provincial theatre. Fortunately for David, he is dead, as you know. I keep his miniature for business purposes, but it always reminds me that David may turn out like him. Well, do you wish to amuse yourself by telling the kid that you want to adopt him?"

"That is for you to decide."

"I'll send him to you to-morrow."

"At eleven?"

"At eleven."

Next day, Fermor woke early and went for a stroll. He lingered for a moment beneath the yew trees in the Abbey Close, and paused again when he came to the Lady Chapel, carefully examining some of the stones beneath the escutcheon of Edward VI. These stones, which were crumbling away because they had been improperly laid by careless masons, always exasperated him. Set with the right surface exposed to the destroying elements, they would have presented as firm and youthful a complexion as other and far older parts of the Abbey. He frowned, muttering to himself while he strolled on through the narrow passage which leads to Abbot Mere's Conduit and thence into Cheap Street. At the Conduit he drank some water, not because he was particularly thirsty, but for the sentimental reason that so many stout masons and good monks had slaked their thirst at the same fountain. Then, more briskly, he mounted the quaint, narrow, winding street of ancient houses built of all sizes and at all angles. Fermor had a kindly glance for Elizabethan, Jacobean, Georgian, and Victorian. He loved bricks, he adored stone, and he was not too contemptuous of time-mellowed stucco. The fact is he permitted himself to stare at human habitations, whereas he was too shy to scrutinize closely the people who dwelt in them. His interest in houses was inspired by his interest in people, but he told himself that he did know a lot about architecture and very little about architects, considering mankind as the builders of themselves and their dwelling-places.

David's adoption was the daring expression of a craving to know more.

Having reached Green Hill, he returned home by Back Abbey, where he was certain to meet boys running or crawling to early school. Many of them he knew; and he was pleasurably aware that he enjoyed a mild popularity amongst them. They capped him, a salute punctiliously acknowledged. Occasionally, the more ardent confided some secret joy or trouble, which flattered him enormously, although he was painfully aware that he did not quite rise to the high level of these artless outpourings. Full of sympathy for youth, and young himself inasmuch as what was fresh and clean and enthusiastic appealed to him irresistibly, he could never overcome his detestable shyness. He said less than might warrantably be expected, because he desired to say so much more.

In the quadrangle he paused again, watching the boys streaming into the rather fusty class-rooms beneath the library. Long ago he had come to the conclusion that public-school life — given present social conditions — was a necessary evil. Most boys muddled through; and at the end, in nine cases out of ten, it was a nice matter to adjust loss and gain. And a thousand times at least he had asked himself the question: "What should I do with a boy of my own?"

Now he had a boy of his own.

He sat down near the Cloisters. Upon a gargoyle hard by was a raven. He stared inquiringly at

Fermor, with his shining head on one side. Fermor took a box from his pocket and extracted three small cubes of raw beef. The raven flapped down beside him and ate his breakfast, allowing Fermor to scratch his head, a privilege extended to few.

The boys had disappeared, but from the open windows came the hum of voices. Fermor looked upward. It was early May, but April still lingered on earth and sky. The heavens were full of small fleecy clouds, white as the lambs in the meadows which border the Yeo. They seemed to be browsing upon azure fields, unwilling to move, yet conveying in their passivity the instinct of motion. The sun floating lazily upward was faintly obscured by filmy vapours. During the night there had been a touch, no more, of frost. Upon the grass in the landscape shimmered innumerable tiny crystals, each cut more perfectly than any brilliant. To a lover of colour and form, the general effect was superlative. And to Fermor, colour and form could be transmuted into sound. The subtle vibrations which produced the one transposed themselves into the other. But, in his case, the magical change introduced harmonies with which he was familiar. Nothing original came to him. For instance, the ephemeral effects of this May morning were set to Mendelssohn's "Bee's Wedding." Fairies seemed to be playing upon muted strings. Again, when he turned his eyes toward the huge square tower of the Abbey, the ærial strains of the poet

melted away, and one of Boyce's stately anthems pealed upon the silence.

Then he thought: "What will these things whisper to the boy?"

And it would be his lot to set these things forth, to exhibit them to young eyes and an eager mind. Not an object in earth and sky, from the filmy veil of mist melting in the sun to the immemorial stones of the Abbey, but had its message: its *Jubilate*, its *Te Deum*, and its *Miserere*.

He rose up, smiling, his plain face transfigured by the faith that a triumph withheld from itself might be vouchsafed to another.

At eleven, to the minute, David appeared in Fermor's room. Miss Vawdrey, with possibly an ironic sense of the situation, had imposed a white sailor suit fresh from the wash. Perhaps she had taken particular pains to enhance the commercial value of goods which exposed for sale or hire elsewhere might have brought a snug sum to herself. Fermor, however, paid little attention to clothes. He liked children to be clean, at any rate in the morning, and he abominated badly made boots.

"Got a new song this morning?" he asked.

"No. I say, sir, what's up? Auntie won't speak, but I'm so excited I don't know what to do. And I ought to be at school. Why did she rig me out in this suit?"

"Because you are going for a walk with me. Where shall we go? Up or down?"

As he put the simple question, he attached an absurd importance to the child's answer.

"To Jerusalem Hill. Let's get as high as ever we can."

"Right! And we'll take something to eat."

"That just settles it."

"Settles what?"

"You said yesterday that we were going to be pals. I've thought of nothing else. It blew my new song bang out of my head. Well, it's easy enough to talk about being pals. But I wondered how you were going to prove it. This proves it."

They set forth, Fermor carrying a fishing creel wherein to stow the luncheon, which David selected with evident appreciation of the good things to be found in a tuck-shop. Curious to test the child, he said:

"You have a free hand! Buy whatever you like."

"But what do you like, sir?"

"I eat everything which is set before me. So did St. Paul."

"Do you think St. Paul liked sausage rolls?"

"We must ask the Vicar. Oatmeal cake, some fresh butter, and a cream cheese will nourish me sufficiently till tea-time."

They set forth to climb the slopes, leading to the Lovers' Walk. As soon as they had crossed the railway, David slipped his hand into Fermor's. No other action, no word, could have so foreshadowed the significance of their future relations. Then he reflected

with an odd pang of jealousy, that this might be a habit. He remembered the aunt's tart words: "David likes everybody who is kind to him."

"You have lots of friends, David?"

David considered the question before he replied —

"They say so."

"Now what do you mean by that?"

"People call 'emselves my friends, and they think that settles it. Miss Callow says I'm her darling. It makes me sick. And Miss Jubber asked me to spend an afternoon with her, but she talked the whole time to somebody else, and I had to amuse myself with her parrot. I tried to—to——" He stopped suddenly, shaking with laughter.

"What did you try to do?"

"If we're pals I must tell you. I tried to teach it to say 'damn,' but, by Golly! it could say it already. Fancy a parrot living in the Abbey Close saying 'damn'!"

"My sense of what is fitting reels at the thought of it."

"Auntie says that nearly all women are rotters. Auntie is a oner to say what she thinks, but she wouldn't speak a word this morning. Never saw her so queer. And of course I knew she was bottling something up."

"I'm going to unbottle it, when we get to the top of the hill."

"I have the funniest kind of squirmy feeling in my inside."

At the summit of Jerusalem they sat down beneath

an immense fir, flanked, lower down the hill, by two glorious beeches now in full leaf. The oaks and thorns were out also, but the prudent ash, with a memory as green as its unborn foliage of late May frosts, displayed bare branches against the tender skies. Below stretched a wide expanse of turf; to the left the wooded slopes ran sharply into the park, and beyond, palely blue, rose Ham Hill, whose quarries had furnished the Benedictines with the stones of which their Abbey Church was built. In the middle of the picture stood the Castle, enbosomed in trees, the mellow tints of its curious gray stucco shining softly in the sun. Beyond was the town, dominated by the Abbey, whose massive tower had looked down upon generations of men.

"A princely domain!" exclaimed Fermor.

"Rather hard luck that it belongs to one man."

Fermor smiled, thinking of the high wall in front of Miss Vawdrey's lodgings in Cold Harbour.

"You have great possessions too," he said quietly.

"I, sir?"

"Assuredly. You are one of the lucky few, David. You have health, strength, good looks, and, perhaps, genius. In my opinion you are richer than the Squire, even if he does own seven and twenty thousand acres of land in Dorest. Also — you are young."

"It's jolly to be young," said David.

He lay back amongst the bracken spikes just beginning to uncurl their pale green fronds. Behind, in the beeches which Pope planted, a couple of pigeons

were cooing. From the top of these lordly trees might be seen Glastonbury and Alfred's Tower. Beyond lay Sedgmoor and Severn's silver sea.

Fermor recalled the men of Wessex, the kings and statesmen and bold explorers. Alfred must have had something of David's Saxon beauty. And then, like homing doves, his thoughts flew to the Abbey, and he wondered whether the boy at his feet would live to set forth in music what Ramsam and Bradford had enshrined in stone. Now that the great moment had come, he funk'd it. How would the child receive his astounding communication? Certain carefully prepared phrases which might soap the ways whereon his offer would slide into David's mind took fright and vanished. He was only conscious that spring was abroad in Wessex and that David was a boy who might become a great man. Presently, he said hesitatingly:

"If you shut your eyes you can hear the grass grow."

"I don't want to hear the grass grow. I'm frightfully excited because you're going to unbottle Auntie."

"Your aunt is leaving Sherborne."

"Then I shan't stay here. How beastly!"

"You would like to stay here without her?"

"Auntie is not a bad sort, but I bore her. I'm in her way. I'm a nuisance. I made certain I should be sent to London because that would save her a lot of time and bother and money!"

"You thought that out by yourself?"

"Yes. I can't pretend with you. I mean, I mustn't.

Last night, before you came, when I told her I wasn't going to London, she got awfully cross, because we both thought they didn't want me. Do they want me?"

"Yes."

"And I'm not going?"

"No."

"And Auntie is going?"

"Within a month."

"Then what's to become of me?"

"A crusty old bachelor wants to adopt you."

"Golly! It's you. Quick! Say it's you."

"Yes — it's I."

The child flung himself into Fermor's arms.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "It's too splend — it's wonderful — it's just right — it's the bestest thing that ever happened."

"I believe it is," said Fermor. The child's emotion unmanned him, the child's kisses seemed to touch some chord in his heart. He heard the "heavenly note" for which he had sought so patiently. And then everything that had been denied expression, the myriad emotions of which the human mind and body are capable, thrilled into music. He understood that he had come into the world for this moment, that the child was his, and had acclaimed him joyously, with a conviction which swept doubt to the void. His heart seemed to stop beating, as if it, also, had paused to listen to celestial harmonies.

"Are you ill?" said the boy anxiously.

Fermor smiled.

"I have never felt better or happier. But a queer thing happened. I heard a new song."

"A new song? You must write it down, as you wrote down mine yesterday."

Fermor laughed.

"It was a wonderful song, but it's gone."

"Where do you think it came from?"

Fermor gazed gravely into the boy's eyes.

"From the other side," he answered.

BOOK I

*“Once more I behold the face of her
Whose actions all had the character
Of an inexpressible charm, expressed;
Whose movements flowed from a centre of rest,
And whose rest was that of a swallow, rife
With the instinct of reposing life;
Whose mirth had a sadness all the while
It sparkled and laughed; and whose sadness lay
In the heaven of such a crystal smile
That you longed to travel the selfsame way
To the brightness of sorrow. For round her breathed
A grace like that of the general air,
Which softens the sharp extreme of things,
And connects by its subtle invisible stair
The lowest and highest. She interwreathed
Her mortal obscureness with so much light
Of the world unrisen, that angels’ wings
Could hardly have given her greater right
To float in the winds of the Infinite.”*

CHAPTER I

THE VICAR ENTERTAINS MISGIVINGS

THE audience gathered together to listen to David Archdale's first recital, after his appointment as organist of Sherborne Abbey, filled more than half of the nave. The townsmen knew that the young man was succeeding Sebastian Fermor, who had retired after five and twenty years of service. Few were aware that Fermor's retirement was voluntary, and that, on tendering his resignation, the Vicar had entreated him to remain. His improvements in the *tremulant*, the coupling arrangements, and the pneumatic pistons, and the pitch of perfection to which he had trained the choir was now part of the history of Sherborne. To lose such an organist, although he was being replaced by a more brilliant musician, distressed the Vicar unduly. To make matters worse, it was improbable that young Archdale would be content to remain in Sherborne. He was only twenty-three years of age, and had attracted attention as a composer of tonal poems of originality and vigour. Dr. Jubber, now nearing his three-score years and ten, loved music, and knew not a little concerning the lives of musicians. Admitting that David was the genius which Fermor believed him to be, nothing could be more certain than his recog-

nition as such by the world. Like Mendelssohn, Mozart, Meyerbeer, Spohr, and many others, he had begun to compose as a child. Fermor had envelopes full of what he called "refractory" ores. They were refractory inasmuch as they defied reduction. Fermor, a purist, who held that music was capable of expressing more than the emotions of an individual, abominated cheap and redundant effects. And within two years of his adoption of David, he had realized the perils and seductions of a premature and facile success. Till now, his influence over the young fellow, his will stronger than his pupil's and, greatest reason of all, his self-effacing love and tenderness for one whom he regarded as a son, had kept Archdale a willing captive in a quiet town. To-day might inaugurate a new era. The Vicar, leaning back in his stall, sensible of impotence mocking experience, told himself that the flight which, years before, he had predicted, was likely to begin.

Halfway down the nave sat Fermor. He had changed little during the passage of thirteen years. Shy, reserved, awkward he would remain till he died, but his face was informed with serenity. He looked a happy man, a harvester of sheaves, content to count them and to reflect that his husbandry would fill empty mouths. He shared none of the Vicar's fears concerning David, for a reason which will appear presently. He gazed placidly at David's present and future, perceiving both by the rosy glow of the past. Had he not leapt valiantly into a dark gulf and, on

landing, discovered himself in a sunny garden filled with sweet smelling herbs and flowers? The child who had leapt with him, so joyously and confidently, had surpassed expectation.

By Fermor's side was a young woman. Several times during the recital she touched Fermor's arm and glanced into his face, at if an understanding existed between them, an *entente* founded upon esteem and affection. David was playing a composition of his own, presented for the first time to an audience, but familiar in every phrase to Fermor and his companion. The theme was ecclesiastical, elegiac, and Gothic, interpreting the meaning and message of the great house of God wherein it was heard. Doubtless the frivolous would condemn it as too austere. Here and there the composer had introduced modulations and dissonants, as if to emphasize the finite discord ever obtruding itself into the infinite and divine. The opening was intentionally chaotic, presenting the architects confronted with shapeless rocks and vast timbers. Through this, thinly at first, trickled the theme, developed in accordance with the swelling ideas of the Saxon and Norman builders. The ornamentation in the second movement, the addition of colour, was conveyed with a breadth and distinction which almost equalled the finished work of Bradford and Ramsam. Fermor nodded approvingly, gazing upward into the roof of the Choir, where the delicate shafts and panelling soar into the finest Perpendicular

fan-vaulting in existence. The general effect of the Abbey Church interior is that of incomparable freshness — as Fermor reminded himself — which had been miraculously preserved by thick plaster. In the middle of the nineteenth century, when the plaster was carefully removed, the beautiful Ham stone looked as if it had been newly taken from the quarry. Fermor liked to reflect that in men as in buildings fine tracery may be overlaid. Had it not been so with him? Till his adoption of David, the delicate tissues of mind and soul were concealed beneath an ever-thickening mask of indifference and impassivity. David Archdale had chipped the plaster from Sebastian Fermor.

The third movement began: illustrating the House Beautiful, a sanctuary for quick and dead. Into the spaces of the nave a *miserere* quivered, as if from the ambulatory, where the Saxon kings, Ethelbert and Ethelbald, lie at rest. The girl pressed Fermor's arm and smiled. To her, death meant the passing to an ampler life, a passage so easy, involving so little change, that, apart from the pangs of dissolution, it ought to be no more dreadful than falling asleep. To her, also, the *miserere* drew tears for the living — those left behind. And faintly blushing, she prayed, "O God! Let me go first!" The wish had hardly been aspirated, when the solemn *largo* began to melt into an *adagio*, so melodious, so pregnant with the suggestion of renascence and vernal change, that the girl asked herself if it were possible that only a moment since she had confronted smilingly the leaving of a

world so fair. She heard the lark and the nightingale, and in her nostrils was the fragrance of woods and fields. Once more, beneath her breath, as her bosom rose and fell, she entreated: "O God, let me live long if it be Thy will!"

After the recital Fermor asked a few friends to drink tea with him. For many years he had occupied a cottage in the Abbey Close, next to the Vicarage, at the end of the delightful semicircle which begins with the Almshouses. The gray stone of it was half concealed by ivy and climbing roses. From its square Jacobean windows one could see the West front of the Abbey, the yews and lindens of the Close, and the quaintly broken line of roofs to the right of the South Transept.

The long, low room, half library, half music-room, was panelled in old oak, not black, but golden with age, and immaculate of stain or varnish. The furniture was of oak, also — simple and solid. A few mellow mezzotints hung upon the panels, and there were many books, and an ancient fireplace. Tweedledum and Tweedledee faced each other as of yore. Upon a blackboard a diagram in chalk illustrated an elementary principle of counterpoint.

At the tea-table presided the girl who had sat beside Fermor in the Abbey. She was not remarkable in any way, and yet men and women looked at her with interest. She spoke of herself as a "back-seater." Fermor and she had many mild jokes upon the subject.

In public, Mary Pignerol was always overshadowed by her father, Professor Pignerol, the natural science master of Sherborne School, a French-Anglophile, who had married an Englishwoman and settled in England. Many of us have heard him lecture. He spoke English well, being an ardent hunter of the *mot juste*, as Miss Callow observed. He stood talking to David at the end of the room. Mary kept house for him and mothered her younger brothers and sisters. Mrs. Pignerol was dead. The Professor, admittedly the most popular man in Sherborne (although for a dominie he was understood to hold extraordinary views), belonged to the Society for Psychical Research; and it was whispered that at one time in his life he had been on intimate terms with the late Madame Blavatzky. More, he never hesitated to draw comparisons between France and England, not always to the advantage of the latter, but his breezy laughter whistled to the wind any suspicion of offence.

Mary could hear him talking about music to David Archdale and the group surrounding them.

"Your work to-day was fine, David, but, like some of our good Vicar's sermons, over the heads of the people. The English have no imagination, but they are ridiculously sentimental. They adore the tinkle-tinkle melodies, which the boys whistle in the streets. If you want to sell your muffins, ring the tinkle-tinkle bell."

Mary leaned forward, smiling, to catch David's

answer. He had a beautiful speaking voice, with the diapason quality. Nevertheless, Fermor's hope that he might become a great singer had never fructified.

"How do you know that I want to sell my muffins?"

"If you don't, it is well." He turned to Miss Rachel Callow. "I am so wise. I see so much. When I was David's age, I too wanted to sell muffins, and I too rang my tinkle-tinkle bell."

"And now?" demanded Miss Callow sharply.

"Ah! I am a philosopher now. An evangelist. I preach to my silly pupils who laugh at me the gospel of work. Look at Mary!"

Everybody did so immediately, to Mary's confusion. She sat still, smiling and blushing.

"That child," said the Professor, solemnly, "is the busiest woman in Sherborne, and the happiest. Look at her!"

"Dear father, please!"

"But, my child, consider yourself, for the moment, an object lesson. You are adorable when you blush, isn't she, David?"

"Yes," said David.

"We will admit," continued the Professor, "that my Mary has enjoyed the privilege of having me for a father, and ——"

He stopped suddenly, as the Vicar entered the room, followed by a striking-looking woman, whom nobody present had ever seen before. Everything about her was on a large and expensive scale. Her hat, her sables, her complexion proclaimed that money was as

silver in the days of Solomon. Under the hat flashed a pair of bright, slightly prominent eyes, of a Van Dyck brown tint, shaded by short thick black lashes.

This was the famous Mrs. Stormont, Felicia Stormont, who boasted that she had revived in London the French *salon*.

"I insisted on coming," she said, in a clear, pleasant voice, to Fermor. "And, of course, I always have my own way. I'm the most persistent woman in England. Please introduce me to your wonderful son."

Fermor hastened to obey. The discreet use of the word "son" warmed his heart. Indiscreet persons spoke of his adopted son, till, in truth, he had come to hate the qualifying adjective.

"I am delighted to meet you, Mr. Archdale," said the smiling stranger. "Surely this is Professor Pignerol."

"At your service, Madame."

"I have heard you lecture. You are writing a book reconciling science with religion?"

"I am," the Professor admitted.

"Science is coming round, but religion holds back. We must have a talk together." With a gracious nod, she turned from the Frenchman to David, who looked slightly shy and ill at ease.

"You will get me a cup of tea, won't you? I have so much to say to you."

David brought the tea, and a chair. He felt rather tongue-tied, but instinct told him, reassuringly, that she would talk for two.

"You are a genius," she began. "I discovered that for myself. By the way — do you ever go to London?"

"Hardly ever."

"Dear me! I was hoping that I could persuade you to dine with me next week, to meet a few people who would interest you."

"You are very kind, Mrs. Stormont."

"Don't say that! And pray don't imagine that I should ask you to play, or anything of that sort, but you will permit a middle-aged woman to remark that a young man should see something not to be found in Sherborne." Her eyes, scintillating with interrogation, met his. He laughed and blushed.

"Perhaps."

"There is no 'perhaps' about it. I predict, with confidence, that you are going very far, but you must be advertised. Advertisement, to-day, accomplishes more for genius than adversity. To be sure, you can know nothing of the latter?"

"Not yet."

"I should like to introduce you to half a dozen men." She named three of them. "You will admit that they are worth knowing."

"I should be frightened out of my life."

"It's so charming of you to say that. I've been rather abrupt, but my host at the Castle enjoined me not to keep his horses waiting. You will come to see me? Stormont Lodge, opposite Hyde Park, on the right side."

"I'm sure of that."

She gave him an approving little nod, and, sinking her voice, said softly: "I don't think you will be very badly frightened. Where is the Professor?"

She rose as she spoke, adding in her ordinary tone: "You will come?"

"Yes."

"I'm at home every Thursday to my acquaintances, but my friends get a warmer welcome on Sunday."

Within five minutes, she had disappeared, leaving behind her a phosphorescent wake, which illuminated queerly some stolid faces. The Professor said sonorously:

"That woman — Heaven help her! — is suffering from an incurable disease!"

"What?" exclaimed Miss Callow.

"Restlessness. She opens her door wide to the living and the dead."

"The dead?"

The Professor always shocked Miss Callow, but she told everybody that his conversation was so stimulating.

"Certainly, the dead. This good lady is too hospitable. She entertains, unawares, the thought-forms of thousands of chatterboxes, whose physical bodies have long ago disintegrated."

Miss Callow carried this stimulating hypothesis home with her; and at her departure others took leave. David slipped away with Mary Pignerol. The Vicar, Fermor, and the Frenchman were left:

all friends, and each sensible that the other possessed attributes lacking in himself. The Professor surveyed Dr. Jubber with twinkling eyes.

"Well," he said. "What have you to say for yourself? To drop that explosive into our quiet pool was abominable."

"Tut, tut! A very kind woman!"

"She asked David to her house, exacted a solemn 'yes' from him. And I tell you it's a pest-house. She will infect him."

"My dear Pignerol, you and Fermor cannot dry-nurse David for ever. In the Abbey, this afternoon, I was thinking with a certain misgiving upon what we three had done."

"Be lucid!" commanded the Professor.

Fermor, in his chair, nodded, filling his pipe. The Vicar, erect upon the hearthrug, accepted the challenge.

"We have taken part in a delightful and exciting experiment: the fashioning of a genius. Fermor, of course, has done the hard work."

"It was easy to me. David took to music from the beginning, but," he glanced at the Vicar, "his Latin and Greek, and," he smiled at the Professor, "his French and Science ——!"

"He will never be a scholar," said the Vicar solemnly.

"Or a man of Science," added the Professor. "Jubber is right. These doctors of divinity are nearly always right, except when they talk about divinity. Our work has been supplementary, but we have joined

together in protecting the boy against the assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil."

"And so far we may congratulate ourselves upon being successful."

"So far?"

"The time has come when our work is going to be tested. We have three strong wills. David has not a strong will. Because of that we have succeeded in imposing upon him our ideas and ideals."

"Quite true," assented Pignerol. He held up his hands with a comical gesture. "*Bon Dieu!* what luck for him!"

The Vicar frowned.

"I wish I were as conceited as you, my good Professor."

"*Cher maître*, you are a dignitary of the Church of England, and I am a psychologist, who, for grievous sins committed in previous existences, am constrained to teach physics to pudding-witted boys. To-day, I value myself and my influence highly. I am no longer the miserable sinner I used to be ten thousand ages ago. And the force which flows through me is divine. I were a blasphemer to deny it. You, my poor friend, handicap the same force which emanates from you by pretending that you are a worm. Master David is enormously in our debt. He will never know it in his present incarnation, or be able to measure it."

Fermor took his pipe from his mouth.

"What are your misgivings, Jubber?"

"For one thing, I am certain that I shall soon be

without an organist. Perhaps, then, we shall persuade you to come back. That is a personal matter, but it drives home the fact that we cannot keep the boy here. And we three have supplied him with so much of what our friend calls force that I wonder what will happen when it is withdrawn."

"Why should it be withdrawn?"

"Speaking for myself, it is certain that I also shall be leaving Sherborne soon."

There was a moment's silence. The Frenchman, with irrepressible sympathy, jumped up and pressed the Vicar's hand.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "It was not easy for you to say that. But, over there, you will have opportunities of which you cannot dream." He continued enthusiastically: "The force will be intensified, provided ——" He hesitated.

"Provided?"

"Provided that the boy remains recipient. Our influence is not subject to time and space. Love is active. It would affect David as potently if he were walking about Mars instead of walking with Mary. But he, I grant you, can interpose obstacles. And so far, he had not been seriously attacked by the elementals."

The Vicar made a grimace.

"You ask me to be lucid, and you talk this jargon ——!"

"Then I will say that your personal Devil, who, to me, is represented by billions of evil thoughts, has

not found this room a happy hunting-ground. And I'm sure that he prefers to play the deuce outside the Abbey. The longer we can keep David as he is, the better. That's why I hated to see the snake in our little Eden. However, he must fight, but we have trained him, and sharpened his weapons, and we ought not to question the ultimate issue. By apprehending disaster, we help to bring it about. I should call myself a false friend, if I did not believe that David, no matter what the fight may be, will conquer in the end."

"Amen," said the Vicar.

"David is with Mary," said Fermor.

Simultaneously, the three men burst into laughter.

"Is it to be settled this afternoon?" asked Pignerol.

"I think so."

"Then you must come up this evening to crack a bottle of champagne. Are you sure, Fermor?"

"Reasonably so."

"I feel easier in my mind," said the Vicar. "I had forgotten Mary. Yes, yes, I feel much easier."

He went away with Pignerol. Fermor sat still, smoking and thinking. To teach an ardent pupil an art dear to oneself is indeed easy and pleasant, but to face public opinion and conventions sanctified by a thousand years is not easy. The Vicar, for instance, commended a public-school education, and had, at his own wish, coached David for an entrance scholarship at Sherborne. Upon the eve of the examination, Fermor discussed the matter with the boy.

He remembered his astonishment when David said explosively:

"I loathe the idea of going to school here."

Fermor sympathized with this declaration. He, too, had loathed his school days. But David was neither shy, nor awkward, and was physically able to hold his own.

"Why? Give me your reasons."

"In the first place, boys bore me. Most of 'em are beasts, particularly choristers. I like grown-ups. By making me your pal, you've rather spoilt me for school.

"This is serious."

"Isn't it? I can think of nothing else."

"I must talk it over with Professor Pignerol."

"I like him awfully. Of course, if you and he decide that I must go, I shall try to grin and bear it."

Pignerol, with a Gallic sense of detachment, asked for time.

"I believe," said he, "that the boy is a remarkable exception, and that his instinct is not at fault. If you decide to bring him up at home, upon lines different from what we have seen here, I shall be enormously interested, and I'll help with his education. So will the Vicar, I'm sure, although we must expect violent protest from him. As you know, I'm bringing up my children in defiance of cut-and-dried standards."

Next day the Professor added a few more words: "David is to be a great musician. The three of us are agreed upon that. Songs come buzzing into his

head, and then you write 'em down. For his age, he seems to have an amazing appreciation of what is beautiful. Public-school life is levelling, and it abhors the supernormal. David is not abnormal, but supernormal: a distinction you understand. In brief, if he were mine, and if I were you, I should keep him under my own eye and thumb."

Accordingly, David did not go to school. And, eventually, the Vicar admitted that Fermor had done the wise thing. The boy responded to the attention that was given to him. Three men, strong, unselfish, and highly cultured, formed themselves, so to speak, into a syndicate for the development of a genius, and they represented respectively, faith, hope, and love. Pignerol had the faith which removes mountains; the Vicar hoped that all would be well, but at times entertained misgivings; Fermor loved his adopted son with a devotion never too sentimental, or foolish, or blind. He saw to it that the boy played with companions of his own age; he treated symptoms of swelled head with judicious doses of chaff; he taught him to recognize humbug and insincerity at a glance, to distinguish the "porcelain clay" of human kind from cheap imitation; and, lastly, the things which no man can teach he left to a little girl, to Mary Pignerol.

CHAPTER II

CONCERNING MARY PIGNEROL.

MARY was some six months younger than David. The death of her mother—and the fact that she was the eldest child—had developed largely maternal instincts. Whereas David had been protected with a subtle intelligence from the moment of his adoption, so Mary, ever since her eleventh year, had protected others: a labour of love which had made her a happy and healthy woman. Other factors had contributed to bring about a result so satisfactory. The Professor did not overstate the care when he pointed out that it was a privilege to be his daughter. He adored his children, after a fashion that in a Briton might be stigmatized as gushing, but in a Frenchman as expansive. He treated them as equals; he entered with zest into their occupations; he took for granted that they were interested in his. Heart and mind were open to them day and night.

This remarkable family lived in a charming house. Now that Science is beginning to take belated notice of psychic phenomena, we may hope, in the near future, to understand with some degree of precision why certain habitations are admittedly malefic, and others as admittedly the contrary. The Professor had accumu-

lated a mass of evidence bearing upon this subject, and was prepared to demonstrate that misery and vice infect a house and a neighbourhood as virulently as smallpox or the plague. Old Mr. Podmore, of Thomas Podmore & Son, Real Estate Agents and Auctioneers, delighted to relate his first experience with the Frenchman, who, on arrival, had fallen in love with a pretty cottage at the bottom of the town. Rent, situation, accommodation, garden were so exactly what was wanted that the matter seemed settled, when, quite to the confounding of Thomas Podmore, the Professor had asked for information concerning the outgoing tenants. Learning with dismay that a notorious drunkard and evil-liver had died in the cottage, after making the lives of his unfortunate wife and children as wretched as possible, Louis Pignerol declared the place to be unholy ground, and to him and his — *taboo!* Ultimately, he had taken upon a long lease a stone house on Green Hill, inhabited during five and twenty years by two dear old maiden ladies, whose names had become a synonym in Sherborne for unaffected piety, crochet-work, and a mellow soul-suffusing serenity.

Behind the house was a garden: Mary's particular pleasure, always spoken of by the Professor as the Paradise of Inexhaustible Delights. It approached perfection because of a sane simplicity so ordered that visitors were impressed with the fact that further improvement was impossible. Children proclaimed it "Just right!" Need it be added that Pignerol and his

family left care without the garden? They entered it for rest and recreation. It was open to their friends upon terms understood and unexpressed. Sherburnians might laugh at Louis Pignerol as being "queer," but they respected the sanctuary from which the mean and false and pretentious were resolutely excluded. No unsightly roofs or chimneys could be seen from any part of it. Occupying not more than two acres of ground, it was bounded on the east and west by high walls hidden behind trees and shrubs, and on the south by a superb, closely clipped yew hedge. In the days of the spinsters the garden had been remarkable for an old-fashioned primness and formality. The yew hedge was cut square; all paths were straight; the flower beds were laid out in geometrical patterns. Pignerol and Mary, labouring year after year with patience and enthusiasm, had transformed straight lines into gracious curves. The yew hedge now presented an undulating surface of dark shining foliage against which, in contrast, stood out lilac, laburnum, flowering thorn and maple. At one end of the hedge a magnificent horse-chestnut and at the other a feathery Lawson's cypress made a frame for the tower of the Abbey. When the sun reached the west the pinnacles would glitter against the soft green slopes of Honeycomb Hill.

An ample lawn sloped from the house to a terraced tennis ground. Near the middle of the slope was a sun-dial with Spinoza's inscription, *Bene agere et laetari*, supported by a leaden *amorino* — Love laugh-

ing at the flight of Time. Elms, beeches, oak, fir, and cypress stood like sentinels between the lawn and the town, but on the lawn itself were no trees except a superb cedar of Lebanon, a weeping ash, and a tall acacia. To the left a variegated maple shone with silvery radiance upon the ilex and copper beeches which hid the wall. Here and there trellises of climbing roses, jasmine, and wistaria, bordered by flowering shrubs, broke judiciously the formality of the garden, and, while revealing the beauties particular to each bed, challenged interest and curiosity in the parts of the garden which they so cunningly obscured. No weed, you may be sure, could be found in the sanctuary, but the strip of ground between the yew hedge and the tennis court had been left as a wilderness of waving grasses bespangled in springtime by daffodils.

Into this garden David and Mary entered. Here they played together as children. Upon the lowest branch of the mulberry tree, near the tennis court, David, when a ripe twelve, had asked her to be his wife.

In silence they sat down upon a low stone bench under the cedar. The back of the bench was curiously carved, representing two griffins apparently trying to swallow the forked ends of their tails. Mary said that she never sat upon it without reflecting that even for griffins it was no easy matter to make both ends meet.

David looked at her and smiled. He was in no hurry to speak; he knew that she was content to wait till he did speak.

..

This particular corner of the garden had an enchanting atmosphere of seclusion and privacy, but even here sounds from the outside world penetrated: the rattle of wheels, the roar of passing trains, the gay peal of wedding chimes, and the solemn note of Great Tom, the three-ton bell which Cardinal Wolsey had presented to the Abbey. During term-time the laughter of innumerable boys fell tinkling upon this quiet spot, and often the fifes and drums of a regiment marching through the town reminded those at peace that war had been and must be again.

"I am organist of Sherborne Abbey Church," said David slowly.

"Yes," said Mary. The smile on his face was demurely visible on hers. She knew that their golden hour had come. Pride had waited till there was something more to offer than protestations of fidelity. She respected this, although not quite able to understand it. When his hand touched her hand, she thrilled. Their eyes met, with no shadow to obscure that first, long, penetrating glance. Each sighed, drawing closer together, in a communion of the spirit, in an ecstasy of emotion, of life renewing itself in life. Maid and man saw the dear image in the other's eyes, which to each represented the incarnation of what is noblest and most lovely. Such a moment comes not to all, and it means to the few a revelation of the Highest.

In the garden there was silence. The sun had sunk beneath the horizon, but the glow still lingered. Spring, with tender fingers, touched the buds upon the trees.

A million tiny blades of grass were piercing the tumid earth awakened after the long, rejuvenating sleep of winter. In every living thing the sap was flowing.

Fermor, that same night, listened smiling to the old story, knowing that Mary had taken his place, and yielding it ungrudgingly, rejoicing because what had been denied to him was given in such brimming measure to his son. When David finished, he said quietly:

"Of all the women I have known, Mary is the one I picked out for you. She is without guile."

Something in his tone arrested the young man's attention. He looked into Fermor's face.

"Did you pick out Mary for me?" he asked wonderingly.

Fermor nodded.

"The Professor and I came long ago to the conclusion that nothing could be more — appropriate. I suppose Mary is telling him?"

"Yes. We agreed to break our wonderful news, which is so stale, at exactly the same moment. Mary is now sitting on the Professor's lap, with her arm around his neck and her lips at his ear, and of course he is saying, 'Fermor and I long ago settled this affair.'"

Fermor laughed.

"We have been blind," said David, and he laughed too, feeling the pressure of the hand that had led him, step by step, to the right woman. "But, father, when did you guess?"

"Ten years ago."

"Ten years ago, I asked Mary to marry me!"

"The Professor and I worried over that a little."

"I remember his taking me aside when I was fourteen and in a sort of way putting me on my honour to stop kissing her."

"He didn't want you to cheapen your own goods."

"I never kissed her again till to-day."

Fermor went out, and appeared a moment later in cap and cape.

"Where are you going?"

"Lovers are not only blind, but stupid. Of course I am going to climb Green Hill to drink Mary's health and yours in a glass of champagne."

"You and the Professor arranged that this afternoon?"

"Yes. Come on!"

"Don't tell me that the Vicar will be there?"

"I should not be surprised."

In the Professor's room, Mary was standing opposite to her father, and insisting upon her unworthiness to become the wife of a genius. Louis Pignerol would have none of this self-depreciation, conscious that it cast a slur upon himself.

"*Ma mignonne*," he said, "let us have done with this imbecile talk."

"I am so insignificant," said Mary desperately.

"It is true you might be larger," her father admitted, "but for me the outside is nothing — nothing at all." With a wave of his hand, he seemed to despatch Mary's small body to some unconsidered limbo.

"Your mind, my darling, and above all your inner mind, makes you David's superior."

"I shall be furious if you say that. And I wish to goodness I knew what my inner mind is."

"You will in time, my child. For the moment you must take your father's word that it is of fine quality. And now I am going into the cellar to bring up the champagne. You will instruct our faithful Babette to take some glasses into the dining-room; the others will be here directly."

"One moment, dear. David says we shall be very poor."

"Poor? You will begin with £250 a year — six thousand, two hundred and fifty francs. Name of a pipe! what more do you want? Your mother and I began with much less."

"I'm not a bit afraid, but I don't think David will be contented."

"If he isn't, I shall have to speak to him very seriously. Kiss me, Marykins, and skedaddle!"

Mary laughed. She ordered the glasses to be sent into the dining-room, and then she ran upstairs to peer into her looking-glass.

For those of us who cannot behold inner minds, it is heartrending to admit that Mary had not a single beautiful feature. Her eyes were bright, of a clear blue-gray in tint, but too small; her nose had a skyward tilt to it; her mouth, filled with excellent teeth, had been described by a cheeky young brother as a hole in her face. The chin, round and well developed,

indicating strength of character, might have been considered masculine, had it not displayed a delightful dimple. And at the left corner of her mouth, whenever she laughed — and she laughed often — another dimple seemed to play hide-and-seek with fugitive wrinkles on the nose. Brown hair, with a natural wave in it, growing low upon a wide brow, a pale complexion, and delicately formed ears completed a whole which was summed up by the Sherborne spinsters as “nice-looking.” Her figure, as has been said, was small and slender. Of adventitious aids to beauty, she wore with distinction simple little gowns which she made herself, having an allowance of thirty pounds a year.

She grimaced in the glass and then, smiling cheerfully, picked up a photograph of Archdale. Seeing her at that moment, even the cheeky young brother would have said that she was beautiful. She looked as she had appeared to David in the garden: the “Primal Fair,” as Plato says, “not made after the fashion of gold, or raiment, or those forms of earth — whom now beholding thou art stricken dumb, and fain, if it were possible, without thought of meat or drink, wouldst look and love for ever.”

David’s photograph did him justice, although Mary would have contradicted this. He was tall and finely proportioned; and his head was magnificent — what the head of a musician ought to be. The brow challenged attention by virtue of its width and frontal development; beneath it shone the eyes of a child,

limpidly blue, and with a curious far-seeing quality. Other features indicated sensibility rather than strength, although the strength might come in time. It was still the head of a boy.

Mary replaced the photograph and descended to the drawing-room. Upon the walls hung a few prints in colour. Glazed bookcases, filled with well-bound books, stood beneath these. The furniture, of the best Empire period, had belonged to the Professor's grandfather, Marshal Pignerol, a cousin of the famous engineer who at Angers instructed Wellington in the science of fortification. The carpet, a genuine Aubusson, faded and threadbare, but still exquisite in tone, was even older than the cabinets and writing-table. Madame Récamier had stood upon it, and Mirabeau, and, possibly, *le petit Caporal* himself.

It was characteristic of our Professor that, underrating these treasures, he refused to sell them. He admitted, with reluctance, that he had been extravagant in the binding of books. And in and out of season he denounced luxury and all things, indeed, which titillate unduly the senses. At the same time, he had little tolerance for teachers who would exclude from the food of mankind flesh of mammals, birds, fish, and every liquid which contains alcohol. Upon the physical plane, he contended, physical pleasures should be enjoyed. The Pignerols lived simply, but no one had eaten badly cooked food in their house or drunk bad wine. Well-nourished and cautious Britons might be called upon to taste some succulent fungus, with

a terrifying Latin name, but they were never offered leathery omelettes.

Almost immediately, Fermor and David came in, and soon afterward the Vicar, who, cornered by Mary, admitted that he alone had not been quite sure.

"We feel," said David ruefully, "that we have not been free agents."

"Puppets," added Mary.

After this, they went into the dining-room, and the Professor delivered a speech, which was impromptu, and yet, in a sense, a digest of the Pignerol philosophy and experience. While speaking, he used many gestures, and when excited, his grizzled hair seemed to stand out like a mane. Upon his rugged, kindly face smiles flashed with electrical scintillation.

"My dear friends," he said, "this is a very great wine, and we must make the most of it, sip it, inhale its bouquet, and not gulp it down as if it were small ale. I bought it expressly for this occasion. . . ."

David, sitting next to Mary, whispered: "The last straw!"

The Professor, with a gesture exacting silence, continued: "The manufacture of champagne is a complex process of which you will find a full account in any encyclopaedia, but I call your attention to the fact that only picked grapes are used, not one imperfect berry is allowed in the vat, and the quality of these grapes varies, as you know, according to climatic conditions which we need not particularize to-night.

My point is: the curious correlation between the processes which go to the making of a perfect wine, and the processes, even more complex, which are likely to bring about a perfect marriage."

The cheeky young brother murmured: "Hear, hear!"

"*Tais toi!*" said the father.

"In the production of the best champagne, my dear friends, both black and white grapes are used: the black representing, let us say, the robuster male type. Where there is excess of the darker berry we find a richer and more golden wine. And the finest quality comes from the first pressing. But the sparkle, the life, the bubbling vitality is due to the presence of sugar. Remember that, you two! Englishmen like their wine and their wit and their wives a thought heavy and dry. Englishwomen of age and experience tell young girls to suppress feeling, to simulate coldness; in a word, to withhold the sugar. My Mary will not make that mistake. She is full of sweetness, of natural gaiety and force. Hold up thy head, my dear little hen! Whence comes this force? I will tell you. It is everywhere. We can help ourselves freely. The very young and pure, unknown to themselves, are saturated with it. And with every act of self-denial that force increases; with every act of self-indulgence, it diminishes. Used unworthily, for mere greed's sake or personal ambition, it will raise the humblest man to the apex of that pyramid we call worldly success. Used nobly, for the amelioration of lives less happy than our own, it will raise us to the very throne of God.

"My friends, I speak from my heart, which is brimming over to-night, for I am gaining a son, who for many years now I have loved and esteemed. Of all of us here, he has been the most richly endowed. To him has been vouchsafed the supreme gift of harmony. We heard him this afternoon, transposing into sweet sounds the story of our magnificent Abbey Church. He is as yet a student, at work upon still life. Soon he will concern himself with real life, and it may be that he will prove himself capable of expressing in immemorial music the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows, of a mighty nation. My friends, let us drink to David and Mary."

"To David and Mary," repeated the Vicar and Fermor.

Before the lovers parted that night, they had a few words together.

"I go to London the day after to-morrow," said David.

"What for?"

"To buy a ring," he whispered.

"Oh! David, aren't the shops here good enough for a poor organist?"

"Not good enough for you." He kissed her ear. "I've been saving up for years and years."

"You, too, made sure?"

"Didn't you?"

She laughed.

"What an open secret it has been!"

"I have had a letter from the almighty Lorimer, asking me to call upon him."

Lorimer was the head of the great firm who had published the tonal poems, and was not given to wasting his time or that of others.

"I suppose it means something."

"It may mean a lot. Mary, now that you are mine, I have become ambitious. I have a hankering for cheques."

"Don't you ever dare to lay the blame of that on me!"

"Mary! What flashing eyes!"

Her voice trembled as she answered: "I am afraid of money coming between us."

"When I want it to spend on you?"

"I shall be quite happy without money. I have never had money, nor has father. Don't hanker after cheques to give to me. Promise that?"

"But cheques mean recognition. If it is true that I have something to say, it ought to be said to an audience."

Mary hesitated. She had not inherited the Professor's powers of speech, and she realized that David would have the better of any argument upon this particular theme. And the full understanding of how he felt made protest seem so ungracious, although instinct confirmed the conviction that her lover, because of his love for her, might confound shadow — for so she had been taught to regard material things — for substance. When she felt his kisses upon her lips, she thought:

"The nightingale sings to his mate, unconscious that the world is listening."

CHAPTER III

THE FLESHPOTS OF EGYPT

DAVID bought Mary's ring at a famous shop in Bond Street, selecting a square tourmaline surrounded by tiny brilliants. The stone was parti-coloured: a green exterior very translucent, with a red nucleus. As he came out of the shop, a lady seated in a victoria beckoned. It was Mrs. Stormont, very vivacious, and conveying the idea of perpetual motion, although sitting still. She laughed gaily, holding out her hand.

"You are coming to see me?"

David explained that he was in town for twenty-four hours only.

"What are you doing this evening, Mr. Archdale?"

"I don't know yet."

"This is really a coincidence. I have a dinner party to-night, and not half an hour ago I got a telegram from a tiresome man to say that he was in bed with 'flu. Will you take his place? It will be charming of you. There! It is settled, is it not?"

"You are very kind."

"Eight-fifteen."

He raised his hat and walked away, while she reflected: "What a face! What nice manners!"

David walked on down Bond Street till he came to

the great house of Lorimer. Its size and importance impressed him disagreeably. In the retail department he beheld many young men with apparently very little to do. Upon all sides were shelves full of sheet music: enough to supply a universe; upon the counters were stacks of popular songs. About these hovered half a dozen women. David asked if the Chief was accessible.

"Have you an appointment?"

"Mr. Lorimer invited me to call. My name is David Archdale."

"Certainly. I'll see if Mr. Lorimer is disengaged."

During the clerk's absence David picked up a catalogue of publications, in which he discovered his own name. At once a sense of being "out of it," which already had made him regret his acceptance of Mrs. Stormont's invitation, gave place to a more sanguine emotion. After all, he was "in it." The time would come when slightly supercilious young men, in irreproachable frock coats, would no longer ask his name in this establishment. After a minute or two he crossed the big room to look at the pianos. A civil middle-aged clerk struck a few chords, and from his rather thin lips trickled a rivulet of specialized information, and then, remarking David's interest, he said: "Are you a musician, sir?"

"I'm the organist at Sherborne Abbey Church."

"Indeed. Not, not, surely, Mr. Fermor?"

"He has just resigned."

"We expected great things of Mr. Fermor. But, if I may say so, he never found his public."

"Perhaps he did not search for it."

"Quite, quite. It is necessary nowadays to search."

The first clerk appeared. His manner seemed to be slightly less supercilious.

"Mr. Lorimer will see you, sir. This way, please."

They passed through a green baize door and up a staircase. On the landing they met a short, rather squat man, with a white pasty face and a thick black beard. The clerk whispered into David's ear:

"Mr. Isidore Schmaltz."

"The composer?"

"Yes."

David stared. The clerk added solemnly: "We have sold three hundred thousand copies of his new song."

A moment later, he experienced another shock. Mr. Lorimer presented the appearance of a prosperous stockbroker. He was large, of sanguine complexion, slightly bald, and irreproachably dressed. His small eyes, very bright, with many humorous lines at the corners of them, blinked when he saw David.

"I'm glad to meet you," he said. "Do you smoke?" The smell of tobacco smoke was rather strong, but not unpleasantly so.

"I smoke a pipe," said David as he took a chair.

"A whisky-and-soda, Mr. Archdale?"

"No, thank you."

Lorimer picked up an ivory ruler and began to balance it upon his forefinger. David felt that he also was being weighed, and that more than he had antici-

pated might hang upon this interview. At any rate, Lorimer was civil.

"You are a very young man," said Lorimer thoughtfully, staring at the ruler.

"Twenty-three."

"I should like to speak plainly to you."

"Please do so."

"You have enormous talent, perhaps more. But you are still one out of a multitude knocking at a closed door. Other things being equal, the door opens to the man who knocks loudest. Did you see Schmaltz? You did. He knocked loudly."

"You allude to his military marches?"

"Not altogether. He is a wonderful puller of strings, with a nose —! You remarked his nose?"

"I saw a large nose."

"Which would do credit to a prize pointer. He has followed that nose faithfully, and pulled all strings available at the same time. His best work is not comparable to your tonal poems."

"Oh!" said David.

"And yet, unhappily, the public will not buy your tonal poems."

"I have other things."

"Mr. Archdale, have you any influential friends?"

"If you had asked me that question the day before yesterday, I should have replied 'None,' but it happens by an odd coincidence that I am dining to-night with Mrs. Stormont, who has kindly expressed a wish to help me."

"Mrs. Stormont, of Stormont Lodge? You are very lucky. Schmaltz in former days would have paid a good round sum to dine at Stormont Lodge."

"But I don't understand."

"You will, you will." Lorimer laughed good-naturedly. "Well, back your luck. Do you play the piano?"

"Yes."

"Offer to play to-night."

"But, Mr. Lorimer, I couldn't."

"Tch — tch! Mrs. Stormont gives concerts. She could, if she liked, make your reputation. Don't misunderstand me! Mrs. Stormont couldn't force a duffer down London throats, but you are not a duffer. Be civil to her, and come to see me again."

David understood that he was being dismissed, and yet, from a business point of view, nothing had been accomplished. He took leave, feeling depressed, but determined that he would not offer to play the piano at Stormont Lodge.

"If Mary doesn't care," he reflected, "why should I?" But somehow he did care. It was intolerable to think that the door might remain shut, and unthinkable to force an entrance by Schmaltzian methods. He seldom used strong language, but he murmured to himself, twice: "Damn Isidore Schmaltz." The critics had done this, mercilessly, without, seemingly, any prejudice to the famous writer of popular songs.

David dressed for dinner early, and, the night being fine, chose to walk to Stormont Lodge. As he walked, he was conscious that the women he met stared at him, and some smiled brazenly. One minx said "Hello, angel!" and David blushed, warm with indignation and pity. Suddenly, he told himself that he loathed London, and sighed for a magical carpet upon which he might be transported to Sherborne. He saw Fermor, sitting down to dine alone with Mary. This had been arranged. After dinner, Fermor would smoke in his chair by the open fireplace, and Mary would sit upon a stool near him, gazing into the embers, listening to Fermor's tales of the past, and out of them constructing new tales for the future.

At Stormont Lodge the sight of a butler and three tall footmen brought an acute spasm of distress, and David wondered whether this was perceptible to them. The great house seemed strangely quiet and empty.

"Am I the first?" he inquired, and the butler answered suavely: "Yes, sir."

As he ascended the stairs, his feet sank into a thick pile carpet, and he noticed a slightly oriental smell, which was very pleasant but strange. The next moment his hostess was receiving him.

"You will take such a pretty girl in to dinner," she said, giving him a friendly smile, "but you mustn't fall in love with her, for she's snapped up. In fact, you are here instead of her fiancé, Sir Edward Montagu, who has the wonderful collection of Nankin china." Then, perceiving that David had never heard either

of the man or his china, she added, smilingly: "Sir Edward's father was old Lazarus, the pawnbroker, so keep off that grass."

David laughed, fascinated by a charming manner, and just then a tall, thin, cadaverous man entered the drawing-room.

"My husband — Mr. Archdale, the composer."

Mr. Stormont held out rather a cold limp hand.

"This east wind is beastly," he said.

Other guests began to arrive, and a buzz of chatter vibrated through the room. David had time and opportunity to glance at his surroundings. Never had he seen so many beautiful things gathered together in a private house. And they were arranged with consummate taste, with a judicious nicety of selection, in itself an art. But not a person present seemed to look at the porcelain, or furniture, or pictures. They stared at each other, pleasantly or boldly, and David wondered whether the background was taken for granted as being the stage-setting in which they moved habitually. His host, seeing him alone, sauntered up to him.

"Have you been here before?" he asked.

"Never," said David.

"Forgive my askin'. Such a lot of 'em come and go, that I get dazed. Never could remember faces or names. Let me see, you're the new member for Bilton-on-Tees, aren't you?"

"I'm an organist," said David, smiling.

Mr. Stormont stared and nodded.

"Yes, yes," he muttered. "You are to be the English Beethoven. I remember now."

David, somewhat confused, said somewhat hastily: "Are those Chelsea figures?"

Mr. Stormont shook his head.

"I don't know. I believe we have some Chelsea, or is it Swansea? You must ask my wife. Lord! what a crowd, but, thank heaven! they don't expect me to talk to 'em."

Above the chatter, David had heard the butler announcing the names of the guests. Certainly the company was worthy of its setting. Men distinguished in art and science and politics brought their wives and daughters to Stormont Lodge.

"They all do something," whispered the melancholy host. "I wish they didn't, because, you see, I'm expected to remember what they've done, and I get 'em mixed up, as I did you."

He shambled off to greet a cabinet minister. David caught the eye of Mrs. Stormont. She gave a beckoning nod, and a moment later the young man was being introduced to Miss Evelyn Kerr-Stuart, who looked him over rather coolly, as if he were a newly discovered animal. David felt tongue-tied. The girl said nothing and Mrs. Stormont, whose kindly tact would have eased the situation, was talking to a Serene Highness. David, wishing that the earth would open and swallow him up, stammered out: "This east wind is beastly," and the girl languidly answered: "I have not been out all day." Then, taking pity upon his confusion, she

added: "There are worse things than the east wind. I have been writing letters to people who have sent me wedding presents. Simply awful."

She spoke as if bored to tears and tired out, but she looked childishly young and pretty, certainly not more than eighteen. Round her slender neck was a single string of immense pearls. David wondered whether they could be real.

They went down to dinner.

In the dining-room another surprise awaited David. Mrs. Stormont was one of the first to introduce the practice of placing her guests at small tables. The effect was that of a smart restaurant. In the hall, a string band played softly. Each of the small tables had its scheme of decoration, the flowers matching exactly the shades upon the candles. The walls of the immense room were in comparative darkness, but half a dozen portraits were vividly illuminated.

"Is that a Velasquez?" asked David.

"Yes, that's the famous one," replied the girl.

"He's unmistakable, isn't he?"

"Is he? They are playing that waltz of Schmaltz. I adore Schmaltz, don't you? How stupid of me! Of course you don't. You compose yourself."

"Is that a reason for taking for granted that I cannot admire the work of others?"

"Rather," she laughed cynically. "Jolly good dinner." She handed the menu to David, adding: "They do you awfully well here."

Four other persons sat at the same table: all

young and nice-looking. Miss Kerr-Stuart nodded to them.

"Hullo, Jimmie! Hullo, Tommie! Is that you, Bunchie? Haven't seen you for ages. By the way, I was commanded to introduce Mr. Archdale, who is a composer. I asked him if he adored Schmaltz."

"We heard you," said Tommy gravely. "Since your engagement you have taken to shouting." He looked pleasantly at David, and added: "She thinks herself a personage."

Miss Kerr-Stuart flipped a pellet of bread at him, and said, with finality: "So I am."

David felt a little easier. These strangers seemed to accept him without question. Evidently, they wished to be friendly. The young man addressed as Tommy was the new Member for Bilton-on-Tees, and one of the most active and enterprising of the younger politicians. Jimmie, he discovered, was a popular actor, and about to appear in a new play. This afforded a topic of general conversation.

"They're advertising you," said Miss Kerr-Stuart.

"I insisted on that. Name in electric light outside the theatre. Down in the contract, by Jove!"

"Good play?"

"Can't say. I've a thumping part."

"Who wrote the play?" asked David.

To his amazement nobody knew, except Jimmie, and from his tone it was evident that he thought the playwright a negligible quantity. The young lady addressed as "Bunchie" asked demurely: "Is it true, Jimmie,

that you and Flora are not on speaking terms?" She turned to David as she spoke, adding, for the stranger's benefit: "Flora Templeton is his leading lady."

"We've made it up. She's a little devil — and no mistake. I choked the life nearly out of her at yesterday's rehearsal, and, to-day, she was all smiles. What she wants is a good hiding!"

"How illiterate you mummers are," said the girl who had not yet spoken. "You mean, I suppose, that she needs a good hiding."

"Mark up one for Kate!" exclaimed the Member for Bilton-on-Tees.

Jimmie growled out: "You be hanged!"

"Seen 'The Breadwinners'?"

"Went the first night," replied Jimmie. "That fellow Barton is impossible. He wore a pair of boots I wouldn't be found dead in, and he kept stuffing his handkerchief into the pocket of his trousers."

David, conscious that his pocket-handkerchief was in precisely the same place, betrayed the fact to Kate, who said crisply: "Mr. Archdale agrees with me, that keeping your handkerchief in your trousers-pocket is not an unpardonable sin." She smiled sympathetically at David, adding: "Mr. James Travis keeps his up his sleeve. He keeps nothing else up there."

"Two for Kate!" proclaimed the Member for Bilton-on-Tees.

Kate Melbury had written a remarkable novel: "The Torch." She was small, and much more simply dressed than the other girls. Her face, neither pretty

nor plain, had fascination, because of its fastidiousness. David liked her at once. He noticed that she ate and drank sparingly, whereas the others gobbled up everything set before them, with astonishing swiftness and appetite. Miss Melbury continued sweetly:

"Mr. Barton gave us a magnificent performance."

"Provincial," said Jimmie. "Sort of thing that goes down in Manchester, my dear Kate."

"One for Jimmie," said the M.P.

Miss Melbury, it seemed, had bloomed into public notice at Manchester.

"*Pax*," said Jimmie, appealingly. "I want to eat."

The dinner was not too long, and admirably served. Presently, Miss Kerr-Stuart engaged David in more intimate talk. Perceiving his qualities as a listener, she prattled of herself.

"I am going to be married next month, as I daresay you know."

"So am I, Miss Stuart."

He regretted the admission, as it fell naturally from his lips. The girl stared and laughed.

"But you're awfully young."

"Are you very, very old?"

She answered the implied question with candour.

"A girl must marry when her big chance comes. A man can afford to wait. Have you snapped up an heiress?"

"No."

"I see." She sank her voice. "It's a romance. You look romantic. À propos, what have you written:

songs — waltzes — musical comedy? Or — grand opera?"

"Principally ecclesiastical music. I'm an organist."

Her expression of stupefaction made him laugh.

"An organist? What must you think of — us!"

"I think you have been very nice to an outsider."

"You must think us so frivolous and ribald. Do you?"

"Why should I?"

"Well, we are. It seems quite odd your being here. If I'd known, I'd have tried to behave myself. That's too late now. You wear a surplice?"

"Yes."

"I'm sure it's very becoming." Then she laughed.

"What is the joke, Miss Stuart?"

"I was trying to picture my old young man in a surplice. How funny he would look. Tommy, dear, how do you think Edward would look in a surplice?"

"Don't, Evie. I can't bear to think of it. What put this nightmare thought into your head?"

"Mr. Archdale. He wears one."

Everybody stopped thinking, staring at David with varying expressions of astonishment and amusement. Jimmie, whose intelligence was slightly fuddled by much champagne, said gaspingly: "He's not a parson?"

"Let us be perfectly calm," said Evie. "Mr. Archdale plays the organ, and he writes fugues and things."

"He has written two tonal poems of great distinction," said Miss Melbury. "If you were not all of you so ignorant, you would know that."

She smiled once more upon David, with a tilt of her small chin, as if to say: "We two are superior to these duffers." At the same moment Mrs. Stormont rose, and the ladies swept out of the room. As Kate Melbury passed David she whispered: "Mind you come and talk to me afterward."

Most of the men gathered round the biggest table which formed a circle in the middle of the room. Coffee and cigars were brought in. A tall, distinguished man approached David.

"Mrs. Stormont has been telling me about you," he began, easily. "And I wondered if you were any relation to Jack Archdale, who was in the Cavalry."

"My father."

"You don't say so. I am General Denison. I knew your father very well indeed. Is he — forgive the question! — still alive?"

"He died when I was a child."

"Um. He was one of the handsomest men in the Service."

David held his tongue. For many years he had not thought of his father, except as a vague but terrifying shadow upon the screen of memory. His aunt, Miss Vawdrey, was dead, also, and of other relations he knew little or nothing. But this sudden mention of the dead man by a distinguished general supplied the missing link between people who seemed to belong to another planet and himself. It established a telepathy. He felt for the first time an attraction, and an interest not easy to analyze. General Denison talked

on, discursively, in a tone of friendly intimacy, which penetrated David's reserve, and evoked answers to half a dozen questions. Obviously, this gallant warrior, whose name was a household word throughout the empire, regarded Jack Archdale's boy as an equal. Hitherto, David had been made to realize that his social position, as the adopted son of an organist, was somewhat lower than that of the Sherborne parsons and dominies, and a rung higher, not more, than the principal tradesmen. The magnates of the county had ignored his existence. This had been accepted by David as natural and convenient. Fermor had been the first to make plain to the boy that social distinctions in Dorset are arbitrary and inevitable.

David joined the ladies in the drawing-room with a more assured bearing and a smile which became him very well. He found Kate Melbury upon an ottoman in the corner of the room. As he sat down, she said with a faint blush: "I have a confession to make. I know nothing about your tonal poems. Mrs. Stormont happened to tell me just before dinner that you had written two. I wanted to make the others sit up."

David murmured: "I have not read 'The Torch.'"

She said volubly: "Isn't this a menagerie? I come here to get copy, although, of course, Mrs. Stormont is a dear, and most awfully kind. I used to be frightened and quite amazed at what I saw and heard, but now ——"

"It seems natural?"

"I don't say that. It seems natural to them. At first I thought it was theatrical, unreal, but it isn't. This is their life. And, mind you, you meet the vital people here, and every man has an axe to grind."

"But why don't they grind their axes at home?"

"What a question! I put it to myself once. That was when I first came up from Manchester, before I went on my own."

"You are on your own?"

"I'm twenty-eight, although — thank goodness! — I don't look it. Yes; I have a nice flat near Sloane Square. You must come to see me. Will you name a day for luncheon?"

"I am returning to Sherborne to-morrow. Do you live entirely by yourself?"

"Of course. My father is a Manchester cotton-spinner. He was very stuffy at first, but I made myself so disagreeable he was quite glad to let me go. I wouldn't go back to the old life for a million a year. You'll feel the same about Sherborne some day."

"I don't think so."

"You will, you will. They are all asleep in the provinces. If you want to live, you must come to London. Hulloo! Here's Evie Kerr-Stuart coming to disturb us."

Evie approached and said in a shrill voice: "We want you to play, Mr. Archdale. Mrs. Stormont never asks her guests to do parlour tricks, but you will play, won't you? to please me. Do!"

"I'd really rather not," said David. He looked from one girl to the other. Kate Melbury said de-

cidedly: "Take my tip, and get it over. Sooner or later, you'll be nailed. Why not now?"

David got up rather stiffly.

"I'll do my best, Miss Stuart. Where is the piano?"

"Piano? Mrs. Stormont has a lovely organ, and the most delightful music-room in London."

She flitted from group to group, saying: "Mr. Archdale is going to play. He has written some marvellous tonal poems — quite, quite wonderful."

"This is very kind of you," said Mrs. Stormont.

She led the way into the next room, which was empty, with the exception of a grand piano and an organ. The guests followed, chattering in slightly subdued tones.

"What shall I play, Mrs. Stormont?"

"Something of your own, please: an improvisation."

"Very well."

Once more Evelyn Kerr-Stuart flew round the room, whispering: "He is going to improvise. I do think him so handsome, don't you?"

David sat down, rather flustered, and looked at the instrument: a very fine one. And in his mind he could hear nothing but Mr. Stormont's melancholy voice saying: "This east wind is beastly." And at the other end of the big room people were whispering: "His tonal poems are exquisite, really gems, you know." Not a person present had heard them, but that made no difference. Each felt that he ought to have heard them.

David began to play. Because he was young and

handsome and a stranger, his audience was courteous enough to be silent, but the prelude was bald and commonplace. He was playing to people who heard the best and were intolerant of anything mediocre. One by one they began to whisper and talk, till the room was buzzing with prattle. David heard them and set his teeth. He knew that he had made a bad start.

"They shall stop talking," he said to himself.

And then, he forgot everything save the fact that he was seated at a fine organ, with a mind aflame with emotions which he could transpose into sound.

Five minutes later, the babbling voices droned away into silence. In that wonderful language, which alone expresses adequately all that the human heart is capable of feeling, David was telling Mrs. Stormont's guests the story of his life, culminating with the scene in the garden, when Mary promised to become his wife. He was hardly conscious of this, but he did know that at the supreme moment when failure and humiliation impended, he had seemed to be transported to Sherborne and had heard in his ears Mary's soft voice, and those other innumerable voices — the choir invisible of birds, and sighing trees, and running water, and sweet bells, and children's laughter — which, ever since he could remember, had resolved themselves for him into melody and harmony.

The theme began simply and quietly in G minor, for David was thinking of two children, walking hand in hand through a garden whose beauty slowly revealed

itself to their wondering eyes. Delicately, with the restraint of a true artist, he reproduced that beauty in a succession of harmonious combinations, and then, holding the key-note while he changed the stops, he altered the *tempo*, quickening the pace of the children into a joyous dance, fairylike in its variety and melodic charm, a dance of Spring leaping to meet Summer. And interwoven with the principal theme were subsidiary embellishments: the amorous sigh of the west wind as it fertilized the purple flower-buds of the elm, the whirring of insects' wings, the haunting cry of the cuckoo — all melting at last into a brilliant finale in the major key: the triumph of Love.

When he left the organ he was very pale, hardly conscious of what he had done or of its effect upon his audience. And for a moment those present looked at him in silence, with a certain awe, touched to issues different from those which habitually engrossed them, perceiving, as through a veil, the Other Side, the Undiscovered Country, whither each was going: some reluctantly, many indifferently, but all inevitably.

Her Serene Highness clapped her hands, and the spell was broken.

"You are wonderful, wonderful," said Mrs. Stormont. "Let me present you to the dear Princess."

Half an hour later, David took his leave, flushed with triumph and excitement.

"You must come to live in London," said Mrs. Stormont.

He smiled happily.

"That is quite impossible."

The great lady frowned, but her voice was still pleasant as she murmured: "What keeps you in Sherborne?"

He hesitated, but the bright inquisitive eyes seemed to command the truth.

"What keeps me?" he repeated. "Gratitude and love."

CHAPTER IV

IN THE NEW FOREST

THE honeymoon was spent in the New Forest, in a small inn upon the high moorland. Each day the lovers wandered through a fairyland of vernal loveliness, ever seeking new paths to new beauties, and then returning to favourite spots to find them changed by sun and shower, inhaling the freshness and fragrance of Arcadia, talking eagerly, but often silent, as the mystery of life and love encompassed them. At night, they fared forth again, unable to resist the call of the forest.

Upon the eve of their return to Sherborne, they stayed out late. The moon shone at the full, playing hide-and-seek with a score of cloudlets. The air was soft and mild, heavy with moisture, for much rain had fallen during the day. Whenever the moon appeared, the landscape was revealed with silvery clarity; when she slipped behind a cloud, trees and moor became obscure, and the lovers seemed to be alone in an immeasurable void. After a long silence, Mary said:

“David, in the Abbey, when you played your *miserere*, upon the day when you asked me to marry you, I prayed that I might go first.”

Instantly, she felt his arms about her, strong arms likely to hold fast whatever they hold dear.

"Mary!"

"Then I prayed that I might live, that we might both live for a long time."

"Dearest, it is reasonable to expect that we shall."

"I don't think so."

"What do you mean?"

"I have a conviction to-night that I shall go first, and that I shall go soon."

There was no fear in her voice, but a strange wonder and awe.

"Isn't this morbid?"

"Oh, no. We have never talked of death, you and I, but it used to be the subject of many talks between father and me. He believes in reincarnation."

"Do you?"

"I am not sure. That is where father is so wonderful. He never imposes his beliefs upon others. He says that we must search for our creeds, and build them up, humbly but hopefully. I hope that we are given other chances, innumerable chances, that we go on and on till we are absorbed in the Power which created us."

"The Vicar would call you a heretic."

"Perhaps. His sermons used to muddle me dreadfully."

"Me too," David admitted.

"Then Father began to explain them. He blames the churches for ignoring evidences of Christianity which stare us in the face to-day. He says that

Christ's miracles took place, because similar miracles are now performed."

"Does he believe in the Resurrection?"

"Yes."

"Does he believe that there can be communication from the Other Side?"

"It never stops, night or day."

"Do the spirits of the departed come back?"

Mary quoted two lines:

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep."

"Whose lines are those?"

"Milton's."

"Of course. But he was writing of angels, not of the spirits of the departed."

"Father says that Milton must have believed that the dead come back, or rather that some disembodied spirits never leave the earth. In *Comus*, you remember, he speaks of shadowy forms in churchyards, 'loth to leave the body that it loved.'"

David remained silent. He had been baptized and confirmed into the Church of England, and during thirteen years had attended some thousands of services in Sherborne Abbey. The repetition of the same prayers, the reiteration of the same doctrine, and dogma had made small impression on his mind. Fermor was no theologian, and acutely sensible of his inability to explain the doctrine, let us say, of Eternal Punishment to an intelligent and inquisitive boy. When, long ago, the Vicar had said in his

masterful way, "You leave David to me. I'll make a Christian of him," Fermor had consented willingly enough. Pignerol also, partly out of curiosity and partly out of respect, had allowed to the Vicar a free hand. It was his part to teach French and science to David, and over and over again, observing the boy closely, he had said to himself: "I shall not interfere. It is well with the child. That jumps to the eye. It is very well with him."

The time has come to admit that it was not altogether well with David, in the spiritual sense of the word. The essential difference between him and Mary as they stood together in the moonlight, speaking for the first time quite openly of the Life beyond, was this: Mary had been taught from a child to search for spiritual truths, and to sift, intelligently, the evidence concerning them. Whereas the Vicar, upon a notable occasion, had instructed David to mistrust a too active and speculative mind, Pignerol, acting quite as conscientiously, had recommended his little daughter to accept nothing which her reason rejected.

"The things which you cannot understand, my Marykins, are many. Give your mind to what it does understand, and, day by day, the mysteries shall be revealed to you, till all is clear."

Accordingly, she had exercised her intelligence upon ground solid beneath her, the rock of her own tiny experience: and as she grew, she saw farther and more clearly to an ever-widening horizon.

It had been otherwise with David.

After a long pause, David spoke in a troubled voice:

"Mary ——"

"Yes?"

"I have always put the thought of death from me."

"Ah! I have wondered why you have avoided it. But it came out in your *miserere*."

"Yes, it had to — as a protest."

She took his hand, pressing it maternally. In return, he gripped her so fiercely as to hurt her.

"Let us face it together," she whispered.

"If we could, but one must go first. Mary, I — I — I don't share your father's beliefs. They are in the air." He made a gesture.

"They are certainly not of the earth," said Mary.

"I hate spiritualism and vapouring about reincarnation. It seems to me such rubbish, such a waste of time. Your father, for instance, has chucked away fame and fortune in the pursuit of these shadows."

"He never cared for fame and fortune."

"But it seems to me he ought to have cared."

"David!"

"I think your father one of the very best, but he is unsound."

"Gracious! What an expression to use about him. He's sound to the core."

"His views are unsound."

"Have you tested them?"

"Tested them?"

Something in her tone, a faintly derisive inflection, arrested his attention.

"Yes. It is easy to test a man's views, if he expresses them honestly."

"How? Do you suppose I've time to waste over what he calls psychic phenomena?"

"A man's views are not tested by reading what he has read. His meat might be poison to you. Father says there are many roads which lead to the truth."

"But how am I to test his views?"

"By their effect upon him. Father's views, as you call them — I prefer the word thoughts — have made him tender, kind, brave, and unselfish."

"But, Mary, Sebastian Fermor is that too, and his thoughts are not the same as the Professor's."

"Are you sure of that? He has not travelled to them along the same path; but I've often thought that those three men, Father, Mr. Fermor, and the Vicar, although they may differ about small things, think very much alike about great things. Each has lived and loved and worked, and — this is the supreme test — not one of them is afraid to die."

The moon came out, resplendent, flooding the moorland with light. David seized Mary and gazed into her upturned face, as if searching for some assurance that she would not leave him.

"Mary," he said. "I wish I had your faith in the unseen. I used to be afraid of the dark. When I was a small boy, I had to have a night-light in my bedroom. Perhaps the light means more to me than

to most men. My music comes to me when I see the light. In the dark there is silence. If the light ever failed — if I went blind — I know that my music would leave me. I have spoken to father about it, and he says there is a scientific explanation for this. The vibrations which produce colour produce sound. Mary, if you went, it would be very dark.”

“If I left you,” she said steadily, “it would be because it was best for you and me.”

“Nobody ever loved his wife as I love you.”

“David, I like to hear you say that, but love, real love, is the same, the one thing that never changes and never can change. What flows into our hearts to-night has flowed into millions of hearts before and will flow into millions again.”

“What faith you have!”

“Surely you have faith, David?”

“I have faith in myself.”

“You have faith in prayer?”

Again he held her closely to him, so that she divined his fear lest what he was about to say might drive them apart.

“Perhaps I ought to have told you this before. I — I did not dare. Mary, prayer seems to me a sort of impertinence.”

“What?”

The exclamation indicated incredulity, not indignation.

“If there is meaning and sincerity in the words ‘Thy Will be done,’ how can we, worms that we are,

dare to even suggest to Omniscience what we want? Mary, don't despise me, but I only believe in prayer as a sort of thanksgiving."

"That is something."

"I have stuck to our church, because it seems to me better than nothing, because I should have made the Vicar and father very unhappy if I had left it. But its teaching leaves me cold and unconvinced."

"You must talk to father."

"I would sooner talk to you."

She hesitated, humbly sensible of her own limitations, and slightly confounded, also, because she and David seemed to have changed places. Heretofore, in the discussion of nearly all subjects, David had unconsciously laid down the law. He could talk well upon what kindled his imagination. His knowledge of art, exclusive of music, was remarkable in so young a man, and his intimate association with Fermor, the constant friction between a healthy, expanding intelligence and a mind finely matured, essentially philosophical and sympathetic, had produced some remarkable results. David was summing up these results when he affirmed, modestly enough, that he had faith in himself.

Mary began slowly, feeling her way.

"I can't think of you as a worm. And you don't think yourself a worm either."

"No — I don't."

"I am to try to explain to you what faith and prayer are to me, and this is the first time that I have put into words what I feel. Well," she laughed softly, "I have

faith that the words will come, and I am praying hard that they may be the right words. One cannot have faith without prayer, and prayer without faith is mumbling. If you have faith in yourself, David, you must believe also in prayer, for prayer is the desire to receive something without us. I suppose a burglar prays quite unconsciously when he is breaking into a house. He hopes that the night will be dark, the dog asleep, and the loot handy. Father would say that the successful criminal owes his success to faith and prayer, faith in his own strong will, and the desire to break through all barriers."

"And who answers the criminal's prayer?"

"The powers of evil."

"I believe in evil and good: that is about as far as I can go."

"If that is a conviction, you are on the right road. If you believe also that the choice between evil and good is ours, you are past the first milestone."

"Yes, I can believe that."

"David, your faith is greater than you think. The people with whom one can do nothing are those who seem to take a ridiculous pride in boasting that they know nothing. If you believe in good, how are you to attract that good to yourself? If you believe in evil, how are you to repel that evil? The only answer is — by faith and prayer. You say that prayer is an impertinence. Is a child impertinent when it prays that Santa Claus may fill its stocking? Father uses only one form of prayer: he asks that power may be bestowed upon him to use for the benefit of others. Just now you

spoke of fame and fortune. I believe firmly that these would have come to him, had he prayed for them."

"Do you mean to say he despises fame and money and everything which these include?"

"Oh, dear, no! But he is satisfied that they are not for him. He believes that you will become famous, David."

"Does he, really and truly?"

"I have heard him say so, emphatically."

"And you, Mary, do you believe in me, too?"

"But, of course."

"You speak so, so — unenthusiastically. Surely you want me to arrive, to make an enduring mark?"

"To make an enduring mark — yes."

"You say that so oddly."

"I am afraid of hurting you. And yet, I must be honest, for both our sakes. The greatest success the world could give to you would be nothing to me unless you dedicated it to the glory of God."

As she spoke the darkness once more overshadowed them, and she was thrillingly conscious that her husband was not quite so near to her. The irrevocable word, the verdict above appeal, which had come flaming from her soul, lay between them, like Sigurd's sword. She heard him sigh, and her eyes filled with tears, as she prayed that his heart might be opened, and that Heaven's healing dew might fall upon it. She had hardly finished, when he said sorrowfully: "Mary, pray that your faith may be given to me, and — swear this ——"

His voice became vehement and insistent.

"What am I to swear?"

"You believe that there is communication between the living and the dead?"

"Father believes it. He says that the evidence he has sifted is mostly tainted by fraud and inaccuracy, but enough that is genuine remains to prove it uncontestably to him."

"And you?"

"David, I don't know. That is still mystery."

"I want you to pledge yourself to come back at once, if you go first. If I have the most shadowy glimpse of you, I shall believe in a future life. And I pledge myself to come to you, if I am taken."

She answered after a pause:

"I will come back, if I can. I swear that."

"I swear the same."

Then he kissed her, straining her to him in a passion of revolt against the law which binds husband and wife together with the knowledge, and therefore with the intention, of rending them asunder.

CHAPTER V

SOLOMON'S GARDEN

DURING the year that followed, the petty cares and worries which attack young married people with limited incomes did not spare David and Mary. David found the choir rebellious because so young a man had been set in authority over it. The Vicar was failing in health, and the withdrawal of his vigorous influence produced an atmosphere of unrest and confusion. Moreover, between Mary and her husband were tiny temperamental differences which time alone can adjust. David told himself now and again that Mary hardly seemed to realize the importance of his music, and Mary, for her part, wished that dear David would not buy large legs of mutton when he was enjoined to buy small ones. But the misunderstandings which did arise always vanished beneath kisses and laughter.

By the luck of things a cottage in Sherborne, within a stone's throw of the Abbey, happened to be vacant. It stood in its own garden, a long, low, narrow, two-storied building, built of stone and roofed with stone tiles encrusted by soft mosses and lichens. The front was covered with ivy and ampelopsis, out of which, brilliantly white, gleamed a double row of square, mullioned windows. Upon each side of the door

were big green tubs filled with white daisies, and the knocker of the door was a delicately-modelled woman's hand emerging from a frilled cuff. Above the door was a rather curious baldachin of carved wood, ornamental rather than useful. Small as the house was, it boasted a gravel sweep, and flanking this stretched a path of broad gray flag-stones worn by the passage of innumerable feet. The front garden was semi-circular in shape, and bounded by a low fence, over which one could see a pretty lawn, an ancient yew tree, and some pollarded limes. Behind the house, quite out of sight, was another tiny garden, less than half an acre of ground, bounded on three sides by a crumbling wall with a heavy coping. Under the wall, and running along two sides of it, trickled a rivulet of water down the middle of a ditch choked by weeds and nettles. When Mary saw this ditch, she clapped her hands.

"What a drain!" said David, nose in air.

"David, I shall make this our sanctuary."

"Good Heavens! How?"

"You'll see, if you live for one more year."

"You can do nothing with such a beastly place."

"Oh! can't I?"

From the first it had been understood that Fermor would not join them. They saw him daily; he dined once a week with them; they dined as often, or oftener, with him.

Before six months had passed Mary confessed to Fermor that a genius might, on occasions, be a nuisance.

David would remain in his room, skipping luncheon, and emerge pale and anxious, unstrung by toil and fasting. Twice he worked the whole night.

"It's so silly of him," said Mary to Fermor.

"My dear," he patted her hand, "that is how Beethoven produced the great Sonata in B flat, the '*drangvollen Umständen*' which we practical folk cannot understand."

"Did you go on like this?"

"No." Then he added with a twist of the lip, "I never wrote a great sonata in B flat."

One morning David announced that he had destroyed his score.

Even Fermor, the purist, the indefatigable refiner and reducer, raised his voice in protest. Mary stamped her foot.

"It was no good," said David savagely. "I shall begin again upon different lines."

"On a still larger scale?"

Irony lurked beneath her soft voice, for David had written his oratorio in full score, for an immense orchestra and organ. He laughed at her rueful face.

"This time we'll call it a cantata."

"I've a name for it: 'Kindly Light.'"

"Not bad, but why?"

She made a tiny grimace. "Because it leads you on and on and away from me."

"Mary — you're joking. Nothing could lead me away from you."

She laughed, not quite whole-heartedly, and, next

day, when David found himself alone with Fermor, he said, wonderingly: "Is it possible that Mary grudges the time I spend at my music?"

"She'd be inhuman if she didn't."

"Father, once or twice when I've been late for dinner, she's been rather short with me."

"Serve you right."

"But it's my job."

"And a poor job too, my boy, if it keeps that little dear waiting for dinner, feeling her heart grow as cold as the dishes she has prepared for you."

"I must be more punctual, but Mary — cross! It's unthinkable."

"There may be a physical reason."

"Eh? What?"

"The usual one."

"Heavens! But she'd have told me. It can't be."

"She'd say nothing, if she thought it would distract you from your work."

"By Jove! I believe you're right. What a thoughtless beast I've been."

He rushed tempestuously out of the room. Fermor, looking out of his window, could see him tearing through the Abbey Close. He smiled and nodded to himself.

Meantime, David arrived so red and breathless that Mary, not expecting him for several hours, experienced rather a shock.

"What has happened?"

"Nothing. Except that I'm a stupid ass. I rushed

down to tell you so. I'm going to turn up punctually at meals for the future."

"David, you didn't race here to tell me that."

"Also I want to ask a tremendous question."

Then, as he kissed her tenderly, she began to divine the nature of his question, and blushed. He whispered it into her ear, and she nodded, hiding her face upon his shoulder. Fermor had guessed rightly.

"Mary, you didn't think I put my work first?"

"No, but I wanted you to give your whole mind to it, and if I was cross about your being late for dinner, it was for much the same reason. You ought to keep yourself as fit as possible."

"I'm going to look after you and you'll look after me, and we'll present the world with — masterpieces."

After this, as if to make amends for any seeming neglect, he devoted himself to her. When Fermor said, "How is the cantata getting on?" he replied briskly, "Hang the cantata! Do you think Mary would be the better for a change of air?"

"No; she has had a change of air. She looks blooming."

"She does too much, father."

"Is that why you do too little? Get back to work and don't fuss."

September was drawing to a close, when the Vicar died. About a week before the end, he sent for David. The once strong robust man looked curiously thin and frail, as he sat huddled up in his armchair, but the eyes had lost little of their fire and vitality.

"David," he said quietly, "I have something on my mind. When your dear father adopted you, I told him that I would make a Christian of you. To-day, looking back with a clearer vision than I used to have, I know that vicars do not make Christians. It was a presumptuous thing to say. And I fear me that on more than one occasion I evaded questions you asked me, or answered them peremptorily. Forgive me, my boy!"

"Sir, if I am not the Christian you would have me to be, it's my own fault."

The Vicar pressed his hand.

"Good-bye, dear David, and God bless you!"

In February Mary's child was born, a strong, healthy girl, curiously like Mary from the first. David insisted that she should be christened Mary, and then and thereafter he spoke of her as the Marionette, and whimsically chose to regard her as the medium for advice offered to a young and too giddy mother.

"Marionette," he would say, staring into the baby's eyes, "I wish you would speak seriously to Mary. I caught her rolling the lawn this afternoon," or "Marionette, please tell Mary that I'm sorry I forgot to order the fish," or, "Marionette, you will be delighted to hear that your illustrious grandfather, Professor Pignerol, honours us with his company at dinner to-morrow night."

His interest in the baby astonished Mary. Oddly enough, before the child's birth, when she was fash-

ioning tiny garments and weaving into every stitch tender thoughts of motherhood, she never once visualized David as father. Indeed, she had come to regard him as a child, the eternal youth, importunate in his demand for the care and sympathy which she lavished upon him so generously. Once she spoke of this.

"I can hardly believe you are baby's father."

David laughed.

"Do you hear that, Marionette? This woman whom we are both so awfully afraid of, is getting her knife into me. She hints, the sly creature, that I'm not fit to be a father. And, of course, she's right. Marionette, she is always exasperatingly right. We're only pals, you and I. Remember that, my young chick."

Fermor alone knew that David's joyous mood was the natural reaction after a season of terrible anxiety cunningly hidden from Mary. David had not been able to dismiss from his mind her words spoken at the end of the honeymoon: "I shall go first, and I shall go soon." The presentiment festered that she would go when the baby came. And when it did come, Fermor, who stayed with David during one interminable night, whispered to Pignerol: "He suffered her pangs. He was beside himself with pain."

Before the baby was a year old, another season of storm and stress set in. David was obliged to give music lessons to eke out an income too small for a family of three. What time was left he devoted to

the cantata, now nearly finished, but, as a whole, unsatisfactory. It contained passages of great beauty, but Fermor knew that it was uneven and weak in design. The tone-colouring and certain remarkable effects of light and shade could not conceal an inherent lack of strength and solidity. Comparing — as Fermor did — David's work with the *Kirchen-cantaten* of Bach, it was impossible to overlook the fundamental difference between the two composers. Also, the labour involved in its full orchestration was prodigious. Popular composers, to-day, allow others to orchestrate their scores: an expensive business. Neither Fermor nor David had a penny to spare.

Accordingly, we behold David overworking himself and neglecting proper exercise of the body, which revenged itself by declaring war on the mind, opening a tedious campaign with a sharp attack of indigestion. Hitherto David had enjoyed high health, an immunity from aches and pains which expressed itself in the texture of his skin, in the radiant careless glance of his blue eyes. Seeing him pale and thin, the Professor said:

“My son, you are foolish. Work is the salt of life and justifies existence, but overwork is like cayenne pepper. It corrodes the delicate tissues, and ultimately destroys them. Be reasonable! You are young and strong, you have an adorable wife and child. Fortune has come to you with both hands full. Write a *Jubilate*, and, inasmuch as you are still one of the green things of the earth, praise the Lord!”

"I am working for your daughter."

"Pouf-f-f!" The Professor snapped his strong fingers. "Your Marykins and your Marionette are as wise as you are unwise. They are perfectly happy with simple things. The only cloud in their sky is the cloud which they perceive in your eyes." Then he quoted the following quatrain:

"The happiest heart that ever beat
Was in some quiet breast
That found the common daylight sweet
And left to Heaven the rest."

An additional cause of annoyance was the appointment of a new vicar. Why vicar and organist instinctively disliked each other it is impossible to explain. Doctors of the Church ought to rise superior to petty failings, but Miss Rachel Callow maintained that the new vicar was jealous of David Archdale, and perhaps he was.

We must pass quickly over months of anxiety and heartburnings: the trials and tribulations so common to young married people, so petty as almost to elude description, and yet in their cumulative effect so disastrous to peace and happiness. The day came when David realized with poignant self-reproach that he alone had been responsible for a domestic *malaise* which a little common sense would have put to flight. Overwork and the sense that he was not doing justice to himself, that his music, when laboriously written down, fell far short of what he had conceived it to be,

made him irritable and nervous. The baby was cutting her big teeth and very fretful at night; Mary, struggling valiantly against conditions of which she had no experience whatever, became oppressed with the fear that David would break down. If he did, if he lost his position as organist, their condition would be lamentable. Nevertheless, David always found a smile upon her face when he came home, and she swore that she would keep on smiling till her heavens fell.

David misinterpreted these pathetic smiles; and Mary, admittedly, may have made a blunder in avoiding reference to his work. She perceived that such mention excited him and ended in a sleepless night. David, poor fellow, brought himself to believe that she was indifferent to his music, that it bored her!

We must introduce into this gloomy picture a shaft or two of light. There were delightful moments, when the fountain seemed to be unsealed, when delicious harmonies flowed into David's head, and were hastily transcribed. He then became again the joyous youth, the delightful companion, the perfect husband.

"I know it's fine," he would say. "This will astonish that fat Lorimer, confound him!"

And Mary would reply: "Yes, yes, it's perfectly splendid."

They had been married more than three years, when Mary was constrained to admit to herself that nothing short of a worldly success would restore to her the David of the honeymoon, who had seemed the best husband in the world. She listened, not without

a pang of jealousy, to his monologues with the baby. He talked to the child with unmistakable candour.

"Marionette, we are having hard times. We are both cutting teeth, but we'll have such larks presently. And I promise you that you shall hear my songs sung by the greatest singers in the world. And I shall present to you Madame Albani and Madame Patti, and I shall say: 'Here is my particular pal, who listened patiently to me when I was poor and unknown.' "

Mary reflected: "He thinks that I do not listen patiently."

After this, she began to pray that the success he craved would be his. And so praying, she knew that she was unfaithful to her principles, and cutting adrift from her father's teaching, for the success which David coveted was the acclaim of the multitude. The Professor had embodied this in an epigram: "The applause of the few ascends to Heaven, the applause of the many rings loudest in Hell."

Fermor was a great comfort to her. His reserve, his discretion, his delicacy in not asking questions, and his quiet humour lightened the dark moments. Mary had nicknamed him "The Looker-on." He saw all of the game, but never interfered. His faith in David remained constant.

"My dear," he would say serenely. "I — even I — have been through this mill. It ground me out small, it may grind out David big. We cannot alter him to fit our rule-of-thumb."

"We have not even tried to alter David; he has altered himself. The wise Looker-on must have seen that it is a big worldly success which his son wants."

"It is so natural."

But Mary shook her head.

"Not natural in your son."

"But he is not really mine. The fight between heredity and environment, which the Vicar predicted, is now beginning."

"Beginning?"

Fermor nodded, watching the smoke from his pipe dissolve in the air. So his ambitions had dissolved leaving the latter half of life clear. Mary continued:

"When we first married, he told me that if he could please you he was satisfied and happy. Now he wants to please that odious Mr. Lorimer."

"Lorimer is an excellent fellow. Cheer up, Mary! All will be well."

Mary kissed him and laughed.

"I've never let myself go to anybody except you, my dear Looker-on."

"Well, well, come and explode on my premises whenever you like."

After interminable delays and innumerable alterations, the cantata was finished. Immediately, David seemed to recover his health and high spirits. Convinced that Lorimer would undertake its production, he bought a new piano without paying for it. He was almost angry when Mary hinted deprecatingly that nothing was certain on this planet.

"Dearest, you have no faith in me."

"I have — I have, indeed, the very greatest faith."

"I should really believe that, if you told me that you had prayed for my triumph."

"I have."

"From the bottom of your heart?"

"From the bottom of my heart, with all my mind and soul and strength."

"What a blessed little woman! I've been thinking of what we shall do. I shall take an unholy joy in telling the Vicar to find another organist. We must have a nurse, and a pony cart, and, perhaps, a parlour-maid."

"You are travelling at a prodigious pace."

"The Marionette shall own a gorgeous pram, and a pelisse lined with the best white satin."

"These are castles in Spain."

"In France, only just across the Channel. If we had a larger house, we could entertain a little."

"Gracious! You make me dizzy."

And then the thunderbolt fell, crushing the unhappy man into a quagmire of misery and disappointment. Lorimer wrote to say that he had submitted the score to half a dozen of the ablest musicians in the kingdom. They were unanimous in regard to its great merit, awarded unqualified praise to David's contrapuntal skill and his astonishing mastery (for so young a man) over the technical difficulties; but, with one exception, they agreed that the cost of production would be enormous and prohibitive. Lorimer offered to publish separately some of the solos.

"Never," said David, in grim despair, "never!"

Fermor said grimly: "The first fruits of genius often fall from the tree. Try again!"

"I can't!" said David.

Two days of dreadful silence followed. Mary gazed at him, unable to speak, fearing to say too much or too little. Upon the evening of the third day she could stand the suspense no longer.

"David," she said, entreatingly, "say something — anything. Your silence is breaking my heart."

Her voice seemed to arouse him. He came to her, took her head between his hands, and said brokenly:

"My God! That I should have dared to marry you!"

"Dared?" she gasped.

He gazed at her with a terrifying detachment, while the sweat broke upon his forehead.

"I told you I had faith in myself. It's gone, gone! Do you think I should have asked you to marry me to remain the wife of a tu'penny-ha' penny organist?"

"Dear, I asked for nothing better. I am content. We love each other. Nothing else matters."

He kissed her and burst into tears, terrible grinding sobs which shook them both. She sank into a chair, and he knelt at her feet, his face buried in her lap. While the paroxysm lasted she prayed with a fervour and faith so intense as almost to transcend consciousness that she might be able to comfort him and wean his mind from the contemplation of his wounds. And, as she prayed, her fingers smoothed his hair with a caressing touch.

She remembered afterward that her faith had been supreme at this crisis in their lives; she had never doubted that her prayer would be answered. The sobs ceased, the convulsed limbs grew still. Presently he lifted his head and met her tender glance.

"My wife," he whispered. "Can you ever forgive me?"

After this, during eighteen months, David and Mary were as near to perfect happiness as it is given to mortals to be. David laid aside worldly ambition, and devoted himself to the choir, his pupils, his family, and his garden.

The plot of ground behind the house had become Mary's joy and delight. She had collected a number of broken paving-stones with which she made a winding path along the ditch. In the ditch, cleared of nettles and weeds, she had placed rocks; and about these were planted saxifrages and ferns. Upon each side of the paving-stones grew grass not clipped too short, in which bloomed the cousins of the iris and narcissus in Pignerol's wilderness. Masses of forget-me-nots, with tulips rising out of them, fringed the rivulet. Upon the side of the path opposite the ditch David had thrown up a small embankment. Here, acanthus spread its beautiful spinous leaves; tall hollyhocks looked down upon poppies and primulas; Canterbury bells quivered in the midsummer breeze; feathery plumes of spirea illumined the blue of larkspur and cornflower. And within this enchanted

border was the holy of holies. Discovering that the aged fruit trees were past bearing, Mary turned them into a natural trellis for all beautiful vagabonds. The sanctuary was a bower of roses in which Mary sat planning new improvements.

At first, David had taken but little interest in this tiny pleasure, but insensibly he became infected with Mary's enthusiasm. She talked of it, using her father's phrases, as a tabernacle. David laughed, but he promised to leave care without the garden.

"Cares," said Mary, "are tares. I really believe that if we worried and squabbled, the roses wouldn't smell as sweet, and the lavender would refuse to grow."

She lavished the same love upon the humblest herbs as she gave to the stately lilies, engrossed with the difficulties of nourishing feeble and sickly plants. When they became strong and vigorous she gloated, maintaining that everything and everybody was intended to grow to fullest stature.

Her absorbing interest in things of simple and costless pleasure communicated itself to David. The doctor, at the time of David's physical breakdown, had prescribed two hours' work a day with a spade or hoe. David played Muscle to Mary's Mind.

And then, quite suddenly, his mighty inspiration descended upon him.

For a year he had never spoken of his cantata, nor had he undertaken any original composition. Fermor made no protest, realizing that the great masterpiece

would come in the fulness of time, and that a period of incubation was inevitable after the drangvollen umständen which had culminated in the failure of the cantata.

David and Mary were alone in the garden. Pignerol, however, had just left behind some of the Pignerol philosophy.

"I am glad," he had said, "that you never speak of your flowers by their jaw-breaking Latin names. Name of a pipe! Isn't *Love in Idleness* good enough? And *Heartsease*, and *Sweet William* — God bless him — and *Canterbury bells*, and that adorable rose which does so well with me, *Félicité perpétuelle*? To me, *mes enfants*, these dear familiar names are not the least of a garden's charms, because they scent the imagination — is it not so?"

And Mary had laughed, saying: "Snapdragon will never be called *antirrhinum* in this garden." And then Pignerol had added with solemnity: "You are wise children. You have discovered the great secret of the flowers; you are finding the common daylight sweet."

When he had gone, David sat down, letting his eyes wander over this tiny domain which enshrined so many delightful hours; every flower seemed to scent, as Pignerol put it, his imagination. Mary sat beside him, and laid her hand upon his. At her touch, he seemed to hear a strain of music, the "heavenly note," of which Fermor and he had so often talked. And then, excitedly, he sprang to his feet and exclaimed:

"Mary — it has come!"

"What, David?"

"My wonderful idea. I knew it would come. I wrote the cantata in the wrong spirit. But this," he began to pace up and down, "this is the real thing. It's exactly right. I know it, I know it!"

Mary said demurely: "I hope what you know will declare itself in the fulness of time."

David slipped his arm round her waist and kissed her. Then he fetched the Marionette, who was rolling about on the tiny lawn, where Mary had sowed some sweet-smelling herbs amongst the grasses. The child smelt of thyme and chamomile as her father picked her up.

"Now," said David very solemnly, "I am going to tell you two angels that the privilege of your society has not after all been wasted on me. I am going to write a soul-awakening oratorio, and I shall call it 'Solomon's Garden.' It is to be the garden of love and wisdom. And every blessed flower and herb shall turn its sweetness into music for me. There!"

He laughed triumphantly. The child laughed too, and clapped her hands. Mary said softly: "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

"Where is that from?" asked David.

"From the 'Song of Solomon'."

"That shall be the opening recitative. Mary, I wrote the cantata myself, but we shall do this together. You shall write the words."

He could talk of nothing else; and next day the

work was begun. Fermor was almost as excited as David. Love, not ambition, had at last inspired the boy whom he had trained to be satisfied with nothing except the best. He too quoted the Canticles: "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it."

Afterward, David often wondered why this particular work came so easily to him, almost without effort on his part. He told Mary that he was inspired; and Pignerol's daughter had no difficulty in believing this to be so. He worked in the garden, and then would rush excitedly to the piano, calling upon Mary and the Marionette to follow. Then he would play and hum his themes, punctuating them with incessant questions addressed to the mother and child. If he suffered, it was from a too copious flow of ideas. The perplexity of right selection made him frown, but invariably the final decision was left to the sprites who work when mortals sleep. These sprites became very familiar spirits indeed to David and Mary, who called them by the names of birds and flowers; as a rule, the nightingale was allowed the last word.

Fermor told himself twenty times a day that all was well. He, too, entered into this partnership with a zest and excitement which — so Pignerol said — made him look ten years younger. And he helped indefatigably with the orchestration and the setting of the words of the Canticles to music. His enormous experience and his intimate knowledge of the great anthems were invaluable to David. But often he

trembled when he tried to compute what the cost of production would be. The ever-sanguine David prattled of the Albert Hall and all the stars, who were to sing gloriously together. And yet Fermor dared not attempt to clip the wings of an aspiration which he feared might be soaring too high. Genius, he reflected, if it be of the sublimest order, ought to manifest itself in the loftiest endeavour. Nevertheless, magnificently as the oratorio was conceived and treated, perhaps its most amazing characteristic was simplicity. Incomparably the finest solo was the one which began "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages." In a word, the inner meaning of the music illustrated the eternal principle that happiness and wisdom may be found in a humble field, provided always that it is blessed by the Lord.

One day, when Fermor ventured to hint that Lorimer might with propriety be consulted, David burst out vehemently:

"I am writing this to satisfy *you*, not that fat tradesman."

And Fermor, gazing steadily into David's blue eyes, perceived that this was the truth, and, as he pressed David's hand in acknowledgment of what was implied, he told himself that life had given to him no moment of keener pleasure and pride.

"Solomon's Garden" was more than half done, when the smiling, complacent Mr. Guillaume Boileau sud-

denly appeared in Sherborne. He would like a chapter to himself, but he is not entitled to it, although we are all aware — for he has told us the tale so often — that he made David Archdale.

Mr. Guillaume Boileau, at the time when he appeared in Sherborne, was not yet recognized as the great star of musical comedy. In the eighties, musical comedy was beginning to dispute the supremacy of comic opera. Boileau, however, had already achieved reputation as a light tenor. He was the son of a Sherborne solicitor of the name of Drinkwater. As Bill Drinkwater, he had sung in the Abbey choir, side by side with David, in those early days when David's solos materially added to the collections. Bill had been possessed of a fair voice, not comparable to David's. But, later, Bill's tenor was acknowledged to be a marketable commodity, whereas David's baritone was not. Drinkwater being an impossible name on a concert programme, Bill had sought for something more attractive, and David had suggested Guillaume Boileau as euphonious and a literal translation. Bill had been most grateful.

Boileau came to Sherborne to sing in a concert, at which David accompanied him. After the concert Bill Drinkwater dined with his old friend, and, allowing for a reasonable amount of swagger, made himself agreeable. Now that he is, admittedly, the best-dressed man on the stage, one hardly dares to mention that he wore a dinner-jacket, coming into fashion just then, and a white satin tie. He amused Mary

by addressing her as "dear lady," and David as "old man." Upon the third finger of his left hand shone a diamond ring.

After dinner he sang some songs. David praised the singer, not the songs.

"You like my songs?" said Boileau.

"They're sweetly pretty."

"Sweetly pretty? I should jolly well think they are. There's only one man in England can write songs like 'em — Isidore Schmaltz."

"I know another," said David.

"Who is he?"

"He is talking to you. I used to make just such lollipops when I was a kid."

"Old man, you'll forgive my saying so, but that's rot."

"They are knocking about somewhere in a big envelope."

"I have it," said Mary. "The Looker-on gave it to me when we married. He labelled the envelope 'Ore from a promising mine.'"

"I expect they'd give you a fit if you heard 'em now," said Boileau.

"Shall I fetch them, for fun?" asked Mary.

"No," David answered lazily.

"Ah! I thought he'd funk the test."

"He doesn't!" Mary replied indignantly. "I will fetch them." And she ran out of the room.

She had difficulty in finding the envelope, and twice — as she remembered afterward — she was on the

edge of abandoning the quest. When she handed the envelope to her husband, he looked at it, smiling, recalling the joyous youthful days. Out of a dozen sheets of music, he selected one, and went to the piano. As he sat down, he half turned, staring at the popular tenor, who was sprawling back on his chair, with a patronizing smile upon his too complacent face.

"This," said David, "was written when I was fifteen, and it's prettier than anything you've warbled yet."

CHAPTER VI

WHICH INTRODUCES SOME CELEBRITIES

DAVID played the accompaniment, whistling the air. Boileau jumped up as the last chord was struck.

"By Jove!" he gasped. "It's exactly what I want. Play another!"

David played half a dozen, introducing variations.

"You're a wonder," said Boileau. "Will you let me have these for a week? I'll show them to a pal who writes my words. Then, if you'll take his words and set them properly, I'll sing 'em."

"You are very kind," said David.

"Kindness be damned! Excuse me, Mrs. Archdale! This husband of yours can't realize that he has a little gold mine under his nose. Now, look here, both of you! I'm not a great musician, never was, but I know what the British Public wants, and I give it to 'em, hot and hot. I cater for the man in the street, because I'm a man in the street myself. And the songs I sing — go! In Lorimer's you'll see 'em tumbling over each other to buy the latest. This stuff of yours, old man, is better than Schmaltz by a long sight."

"Thanks."

"Evidently you don't believe me. All right, wait

a year! And if you'll take my tip, which I suppose you won't, chuck this church music, and concentrate on songs. Gad! I never heard such tricky little melodies. Play 'em again!"

David played them again.

Next day Monsieur Guillaume Boileau returned to London, taking David's songs with him. Curiously enough, the popular tenor's enthusiasm and admiration aroused no response in David. However, when he told Férnor what Boileau had said, the man of experience laughed.

"He is probably right."

"Those tinkling melodies: sugary trash! I wouldn't let him hear them, if we were not so confoundedly hard up."

"Everybody likes sugar in some form or another."

A week passed, and then David received a peremptory telegram: "*Come up at once. Lorimer must see you.*"

Lorimer welcomed him warmly with a cordial shake of the hand and the emphatic remark: "Now you are coming into your own." Boileau, who was present, introduced Mr. Tom Merryweather, the song-writer and librettist.

"Take a good look at Tom," urged Boileau.

David obeyed. Merryweather smiled deprecatingly.

"There's not much to look at," he murmured.

This was uncomfortably true. Merryweather might have passed as an apothecary with a diminishing business.

"Tom," said Boileau, "looks rather tired. He overworks himself signing receipts for cheques on account of royalties. What did you make with the 'Laundrymaid,' old man? Tell David. It'll give him an appetite for lunch."

Merryweather shrugged a thin pair of shoulders. In his pale, clean-shaven face a pair of gray eyes twinkled lazily.

"I made much more than the hussy was worth," he said.

"That's rot," said Lorimer emphatically. "A thing is worth what it will fetch in the open market, neither more nor less. Let's get to business."

Within ten minutes the business was despatched. Merryweather agreed to write three lyrics for three of the songs. Boileau undertook to sing them upon the first opportunity. Lorimer, as publisher, bought the world's rights. A few minutes later, Boileau and David were standing in Bond Street, taking leave of Merryweather, who refused luncheon upon the plea of an impaired digestion.

"He'd sacrifice half his royalties if he could eat lobster," said the late Mr. Bill Drinkwater.

Taking David's arm, and pressing it, Boileau began to walk toward Piccadilly. David perceived that his companion, who was slightly overdressed, glanced complacently at the foot passengers. Some of these turned to look twice at a face rapidly becoming familiar to all London. David heard the women whispering to each other as they strolled by: "That's

Guillaume Boileau." Boileau heard them also and smiled even more complacently.

"You know, old man, without bragging, it's jolly lucky for you that I was there this morning. I made Lorimer do the square thing by you. He'd have pinched you if I hadn't told him that you were my particular pal."

Again he pressed David's arm affectionately, and set his hat, a top-hat, shiny and curly of brim, at a knowing angle.

"We're on the make," he continued, "but some of us don't want to hog it all. I feel like a bottle of fizz for lunch."

At a famous restaurant, David's name as a composer of popular songs was toasted. The room was full of people, and David noticed that his companion seemed to be upon intimate terms with some of the youngest and prettiest women present. Near Boileau's table sat two "dashers," the celebrated Daffy-down-Dilly and a friend. They greeted the tenor gaily; and he at once introduced David, adding:

"In the musical comedy which Tom Merryweather is now writing, Miss Daffodil and I have the leading parts. Can't you two darlings sit at our table?"

"We have nearly finished," said Miss Daffodil, demurely. She glanced at David out of the corner of a pair of eyes which had captivated thousands of men, young and old. Indeed, the town had prostrated itself at her pretty feet ever since her appearance in

the "Laundrymaid." Also, she was clever, and of this David was to have proof immediately.

Boileau, in a not too discreet whisper, explained to David that Daffy was engaged to the eldest son of a noble marquis, and that she behaved with exemplary propriety.

"You whisper too loud," murmured Miss Daffodil.

"Pooh!" said Boileau. "Don't be a humbug, Daffy! You want the world and his wife, particularly the wife, to gobble up the fact that you are a good little girl."

David, not altogether at his ease in this high society, glanced at other tables. He was struck by the general air of prosperity.

"What a jolly crowd," he whispered.

"Jolly? I believe you. Of course they come here to celebrate. And they share the Irish gentleman's conviction that it's wise to make the most of life because one is sure to be a long time dead. Waiter! A bottle of Pommery, same I always have."

"Oui, Monsieur."

During the excellent luncheon that followed, Boileau expounded his philosophy to a wondering organist, who tried to recognize in the speaker some resemblance to the boy who had sung in the Abbey choir. Failing in this, he recalled the dinner at Stormont Lodge, and launched a question:

"This is successful London, eh?"

"Right you are! They want the best, and get it."

"Do they?"

"You bet your life, old man. And now you've

tasted blood, you'll want it. At this blessed moment my poor old daddy is sitting down to resurrection pie. Have another glass of fizz?"

"They can't be all as jolly as they look."

"As for that, we get the habit of looking jolly. And it pays. Don't forget that! Grins are worth money in this little village. Daffy couldn't help grinning in that hat, could she?"

"Grin and wear it!"

"Fine! You'll do, David. I think I shall call you Dave. I say, Daff, do you think this young man here looks like a David or a Dave?"

"I shall call him Dave with the smallest encouragement."

"Consider yourself encouraged," said the ardent Boileau. "If you're very nice to him, he may write you a song."

Instantly David perceived a flash of rather cold hard light in the pretty eyes gazing into his.

"You write songs?"

"He is writing three songs for me," said Boileau solemnly, "that will be played by every barrel organ in the kingdom within six months."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Miss Daffodil. "Better have your coffee over here."

She beamed upon David and insisted that he should sit beside her. Boileau ordered some old brandy. The ladies ordered the same, and found it so extraordinarily mild that they took, each, a second glassful. Presently, a tall young man, conspicuously dressed

as if about to go rat-catching, entered the restaurant and approached Miss Daffodil.

"It's my young man, Bingo," she said, with a smile that was not quite natural.

My lord sauntered up. His eyes were small and slightly furtive. He nodded coolly and said: "Come on, Daffy!"

She hesitated, with a tiny frown just visible upon her forehead. Then, swiftly making up her mind to be agreeable, she said with a gay laugh: "All right. You won't mind my running away, dear?" She glanced at her friend, who nodded. "Mr. Boileau will take care of you. Waiter, my bill!"

"I'll pay the bill," said Bingo stolidly.

"No, no," protested the young lady.

But when the bill was presented, Bingo masterfully insisted. David saw him stare at the total, biting his lips and scowling.

"Done yourselves jolly well," he growled.

"When I ask a friend to lunch, I always give her the best."

"Do you always have two glasses of brandy?"

There was an instant's pause, and then David, to his amazement, heard Daffy's soft voice raised in indignant protest.

"Two?"

"Two, each, at half a crown apiece."

Daffy laughed, turning to Boileau.

"The stupid fellow has charged us with your extra brandies."

"So he has," said the genial Boileau. "Here, you silly ass, you've made a mistake. Two of those brandies are mine — see?"

"Oui, Monsieur."

A moment later, Bingo and Miss Daffodil left the restaurant together.

"Clever as they make 'em!" said Boileau, with real enthusiasm.

"Never knew her without a gilt-edged lie handy," admitted the friend.

Next day, David returned home. He told Mary what had passed with a derisive smile upon his face, And then, to the Marionette, who was looking up at him adoringly, he remarked:

"You ought to be a proud girl. The barrel organs in London are going to play your daddy's songs."

Alone with Fermor and Mary, he spoke with vehemence and acrimony:

"I asked Lorimer about 'Solomon's Garden.' I actually played to him 'Come, my Beloved!' and — hang him — he was as cold as Greenland's icy mountains. He hinted that I was off my head and that he wouldn't help to make me madder than I was. But he raves about those rotten songs. All right, if they do go, I'll produce 'Solomon's Garden' myself."

"Um!" said Fermor.

"Why not?"

"I hope I shall live to see your oratorio produced, but it seems to me — I daresay I am wrong — that you

can't expect to capture two publics. If you establish a demand for what is played on street organs, you will have to meet it, and continue meeting it. In a word, you can't serve two masters."

"The public I wish to serve won't listen to me, according to Lorimer."

Fermor's eyes twinkled.

"Let us admit, David, that it would cost a very large sum of money to listen to you. Lorimer was willing to publish the solos in the cantata."

"To share the fate of the tonal poems. Father, I can't work up as you tried to do. It would kill me. If Boileau is right, and he seems a shrewd fellow, I shall make pots of money, and then I shall go back to the work I love."

"If you can," said Mary in a low voice.

He turned upon her sharply.

"If I can? Didn't one of those Barbizon artists paint chocolate boxes for bread and butter?"

"True," replied Fermor, "but only for bread and butter. I understood that Boileau was going to boom you."

"Why shouldn't your songs be published anonymously?" said Mary.

"By Jove!" said David. "What a splendid idea! Why, of course. Isn't she a clever little woman, father?"

"It might be done," said Fermor. "But would Boileau and Lorimer and Merryweather hold their tongues?"

"I shall write to them to-night."

Accordingly, it came to pass that the songs were published anonymously. The first was a colossal success, even as Boileau had predicted. It was sung all over the world, and turned into a waltz. The two that followed immediately were nearly as popular. David was obliged to stop work upon his oratorio, but he opened an account with a London bank, into which began to trickle a steady stream of gold. Nevertheless, he remained at Sherborne apparently unchanged. Only Fermor and Mary divined that his work in the Abbey had become drudgery.

Finally, another of Lorimer's telegrams summoned him to London. But before the publisher could explain what he wanted, David burst out: "When are you going to produce 'Solomon's Garden'?"

Lorimer raised his thick eyebrows.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed, "you're not weaving ropes out of that sand, when you've mountains of flax in sight? Tom Merryweather wants you to do a musical comedy with him, and Williams, Taffy Williams, is coming here in half an hour. He's prepared to sign an agreement this afternoon. This may mean twenty thousand pounds to you. Let us talk then of oratorios."

David felt the blood rushing into his head.

Lorimer, eyeing him keenly, continued talking. We can guess what he said, and how cleverly he said it. At the end he added:

"By the way, isn't it time to come out of your shell?"

"No," said David.

"As you please, but, of course, the secret can't be kept much longer."

"Why not?"

"Because you'll have to rehearse at the Jollity."

Evidently, Lorimer was taking for granted that the agreement with Williams would be signed that afternoon. Merryweather and Boileau, who arrived together, took the same view. Boileau and Daffy-down-Dilly were to be assigned the principal parts. Daffy, it seemed, had broken her engagement with Bingo on the ground that she did not love him. This astonishing fact, judiciously paragraphed, brought much grist to the Jollity mill.

Then the great man arrived.

Taffy Williams, at this date, was universally acclaimed as the inventor of musical comedy. And, to-day, he admits modestly enough that he cannot tell how musical comedy came to be. Like Topsy — it growed. He alone would seem to have grasped the essential truth that you cannot give too much of a real good thing to the British Public. He was the first to count the laughs night after night during the first week's run of a piece; he insisted upon the repetition of gags and funny business; he subordinated plot to playing the fool, consequence to inconsequence, and matter to manner. The axiom was established that ends — the shapeliest in the kingdom — justify means, and indeed create them. What the peerage owes to him, the peerage has recorded. Restaura-

teurs, barristers, solicitors, tradesmen, and ten thousand others regard Taffy Williams as one of the world's greatest benefactors.

He impressed David as a kindly man and, in a sense, singularly modest, speaking in a deprecating tone, and giving to others credit for the colossal successes already achieved.

"I syndicate talent," he said. "I'm always on the lookout for something fresh and clean."

"He scours the music halls," explained Boileau.

Williams nodded, exhibiting a melancholy smile.

"Have you arranged anything, gentlemen?" he asked.

"It's all cut and dried," asserted Boileau.

"We have not had a word from Mr. Archdale," said Lorimer. "And he refuses to come out of his shell."

Seeing David rather confused and at a disadvantage, Merryweather said pleasantly, "I think we can work together."

"Oh, yes," David admitted.

"My plan is simple. I am not a composer, or course, but I know what Williams wants."

"As well as any man living," growled Taffy.

"I say to you, Mr. Archdale ——"

"For Heaven's sake, call him David, and have done with it," interrupted Boileau."

Merryweather continued suavely: "I say, therefore, let me pass judgment upon your work on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; and you slate mine

on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Neither is bound to accept the suggestions of the other, but each is bound to listen civilly. When we've done our little best, Williams has a last word. I warn you that, lamb-like as he appears now, he is a tiger at rehearsal."

"I must take time to think this over," said David. Everybody stared at him.

"Time?" repeated Boileau. "Good Lord!"

"This means," said David, "a burning of ships."

"Ships?" echoed Boileau. He appealed helplessly to Lorimer. "What does he mean?"

"Mr. Archdale," said Lorimer, with becoming gravity, "has almost finished a very fine oratorio: words and music."

"Might use some of the music," said Williams hopefully. "Got a bit of a swing, I daresay."

"Quite impossible," said David stiffly.

Lorimer continued with bland dignity, although inwardly sensible that he was skating over thin ice: "Gentlemen, Mr. Archdale is a genius."

Everybody said "Yes" and "Hear, hear."

"Being a genius," continued Lorimer, in an easier tone, "he has fixed his eyes upon the stars."

"Same here," said Williams, "but stars come expensive in oratorio."

"I offered to publish his solos in a cantata separately, but Mr. Archdale wouldn't allow it. He demanded an immense production, and I told him quite frankly it was impossible. And it is impossible to-day. Why? Because as yet Mr. Archdale has no public. But let

him be known all over England and America as the composer of a popular musical comedy, and then — well, if he is still set upon the production of his oratorio I'll engage a hundred fiddlers, but I must have a name behind such a production which will fill the Albert Hall before a note of the music is heard."

"Ab-solutely sound!" exclaimed Boileau.

"If Mr. Archdale won't be persuaded, Schmaltz remains," said Williams heavily. "He was at me last night."

Boileau rose impatiently.

"Well — there it is, David. Take it or leave it! I'll just say this: no man of your age ever had such a chance before."

"Never," said Lorimer, with emphasis.

David rose also, with a hunted look in his fine eyes.

"I return to Sherborne to-night. To-morrow you shall have a wire from me — Yes or No. I have others to consider besides myself, but I'm sincerely grateful to you for making me this offer. Good afternoon."

He went out quickly. Williams lit an enormous cigar.

"The answer will be 'Yes,'" he murmured lazily.

CHAPTER VII

DAVID CROSSES THE RUBICON

NOTHING is more instructive than the proper understanding of the relation between small causes and great effects. One begins, in time, to wonder if the two antithetical adjectives are not synonyms. For instance, it is probable that David Archdale's answer to Lorimer would have been 'No' had not the vicar's nephew happened to be spending a few days with his uncle. This young man was an excellent fellow, but indiscreet. Also he had a remarkable memory for faces, and David's face was one not easily forgotten. Uncle and nephew were at the railway station when David returned from London.

"Who is that?" said the nephew.

"My organist, David Archdale," replied the Vicar stiffly, for the question was asked too often to be quite agreeable to the autocrat of the Abbey.

The nephew laughed and whistled.

"Your organist, is he? Trips up to town — eh? Well, the last time I saw Mr. David Archdale, he was having luncheon at one of the smartest restaurants in London with two Jollity girls."

"Impossible," said the Vicar.

From his uncle's frigid tone the nephew realized that he had "given David away." Immediately he

made matters worse by adding ingenuously: "Of course; I have made an absurd mistake. Your organist has a double."

The Vicar dropped the subject. But he told himself that it was his duty to ask a question. Accordingly, next morning, he sent for his organist, and said abruptly:

"Mr. Archdale, is it true that you were seen, some time ago, at one of the London restaurants, with two girls from the Jollity Theatre?"

"Quite true," said David.

To another man he would have explained the circumstances. And we must admit that David owed an explanation to his chief, but the Vicar's face was set and hard, the face of a judge who has prejudged an offender. David's silence, moreover, barbed the words that followed.

"Obviously, Mr. Archdale, you think that this is a matter which does not concern me?"

"I do."

"I am sorry you take this line with me."

The slightly offensive emphasis on the pronoun indicated threats of punishment. And the Vicar's manner was unconsciously that of a social superior. More, since the death of Dr. Jubber, David's visits to the vicarage, in an unofficial capacity, had ceased. The Vicar's wife and daughters, worthy, well-meaning women, had been heard to declare that "poor Dr. Jubber had really made an absurd fuss about his organist." We shall not cite a score of petty slights,

mere pin-pricks, but irritating to a sensitive man, which David — to do him justice — had tried to forget. Very deliberately he said:

“I have tried to do my duty as organist, but I resent your question. I consider it impertinent.”

“Impertinent, sir?”

David smiled. The Vicar was scarlet with rage and indignation.

“Yes,” David continued. “It makes it impossible for me to continue in my present position. I resign now.”

“Now?”

“Now, sir. If you care to apologize, and ask me as a particular favour to you to continue my duties till you find my successor, I shall accept the apology and remain with you, reluctantly, a little longer.”

The Vicar gasped.

“You can go, sir. I shall not apologize, and I anticipate no difficulty in finding another organist.”

Mary could not help laughing when she heard this story, but Fermor winced. And Fermor had not yet been told of Lorimer’s offer, which, presently, was laid before him. Then David added: “I have wired an acceptance to Lorimer.”

“Then the Rubicon is crossed?”

“Yes.”

There was an instant’s pause. David heard Fermor suppress a sigh, but the quiet face remained serene, the quiet voice said kindly: “I shall see the Vicar and offer to take your place. Poor man! His organist

drinking old brandy with two Jollity girls! You were rather hard on him."

"Pompous, tyrannical ass!"

"Come, come!"

"David," said Mary, "I suppose everybody will know now that you wrote 'In Cowslip Time' and 'When Cuckoos Call'?"

"I didn't write the idiotic words."

"Will this take us from Sherborne?"

"Why should it?" David answered vaguely.

Fermor glanced at him. At that moment he realized that the boy he loved was cutting loose from his moorings. Suddenly he thrust out his hand.

"Wherever it takes you, David, carry with you my belief that it will be well with you in the end. You were intended to be a conqueror. If the Rubicon lies between the victory I desired for you and the easier triumph within your grasp, so be it. I shall be content if you profit by the losing of my prayers."

"What ever happens, I shall finish 'Solomon's Garden'."

Two very pleasant months followed. Sherborne acclaimed the composer of "In Cowslip Time," and David was entreated by many young ladies to inscribe his name in dainty albums. The *Dorchester Chronicle* published an interview with the talented young composer, and announced the forthcoming musical comedy. Accommodating gentlemen wrote to David offering to lend him money upon no security other than his note of hand.

"The scoundrels believe in me," said David. "I shall buy you a pearl necklace, Mary." Then he added seriously: "Your prayers were answered, you see."

"Yes," said Mary, smiling.

Pignerol was philosophical.

"Our David has chosen the facile success," he remarked to Fermor. "He will be the English Strauss, not Beethoven. It's a secret grief to you, my friend, but to me, look you, all is well, provided he remains simple and clean and kind. That alone matters."

Fermor hesitated.

"If he is satisfied ——"

"Yes, yes; that, of course, is most important. He looks radiant; the golden youth, I call him."

"The gold comes in, but these jingling tunes ——"

"If they make tired folk dance, let us rejoice."

The tunes, as Fermor called them, came to David in battalions. The only difficulty was that of selection. Upon this also the Professor had whimsical theories.

"You are the vehicle, David, for the expression of pretty songs composed by musical children who died young."

"I believe there is something in it. Where do they come from?"

"My dear boy, all that is good and fair is indestructible substance, although protean. You are in it and of it. Well, help yourself, take all you can absorb; wallow, my young friend!"

"I never felt so fit in my life."

Soon afterward, Tom Merryweather spent a fort-

night in the cottage, bringing with him the book entitled "The Peer of the Peri." David had received a scenario some weeks before. The book appalled him, although he recognized its cleverness.

"Terrible rot," admitted Merryweather, "but that's what's wanted. Taffy Williams is delighted with it."

Then David played his songs.

Some of these were delightfully lyrical, but, to his amazement and disgust, Merryweather selected the most jingling. His standard seemed to be: "Can a boy whistle this after hearing it once?"

An affirmative answer settled the matter.

David said to Mary that he had never passed such a disagreeable morning. However, in the afternoon a pleasant incident occurred. He had played over his songs, when he remembered a waltz which had floated into his head while he was telling a fairy story to the Marionette. David had come to grief over the story, which was condemned as silly by his daughter. And then he had laughed and said: "I can't tell it, Marionette, because the pixies have been interrupting, but, by Jove, I can play it."

So saying, he had rushed at the piano, and, an instant later, the child was dancing to measures which the critics submitted afterward to be such stuff as fairies' dreams are made of. And, curiously enough, he had not thought of introducing this exquisite trifle into the musical comedy. He played it to Merryweather because that wise man had said carelessly: "We ought to have some sort of a fantastic dance in here."

When he had finished, Merryweather jumped up, as Boileau had done, wildly enthusiastic.

"We're all right," he affirmed. "Fancy keeping that up your sleeve. Why, man, the whole world will dance to the most haunting, bewitching thing I've ever heard."

"Is it?" said David, genuinely amazed.

"Lord! You are a genius at this game."

After much argument, David was persuaded to introduce the theme of the waltz into his overture, and thereafter, subtly but unmistakably, it pervaded the whole comedy.

"Don't play it to a soul!" counselled Merryweather.

When the librettist returned to town, David suffered a reaction. Setting Tom's words to music, laboriously conning every syllable, he could not bring himself to believe that the British Public would listen to such irrelevant nonsense, such crude jokes, such vulgar — how that adjective rasped him! — twaddle! And, crowning humiliation! at the last moment, when he bade Merryweather good-bye, the little man had said, with a twist of his lip:

"Of course, you must be prepared for torture at the rehearsals. Taffy will have his gang sitting in judgment on us. And he'll cut and slash like a Malay running amuck. I'm thin enough as it is, but I always lose a stone over rehearsals."

The rehearsals began six weeks before the production, and David and Mary and the Marionette went up to London, taking modest lodgings in Bloomsbury. They dined with Lorimer, and after dinner the wonder-

ful waltz was played. Lorimer, whom David had deemed incapable of enthusiasm, seized Mary and whirled her round the room.

"I couldn't help it," he explained. "You're a wizard."

Next day the head of the house of Lorimer despatched a long cablegram to New York, which inspired an offer from the greatest of American managers to buy Transpontine rights. When this offer was accepted, Lorimer said to David:

"We've got a gold mine, I do believe."

Meantime the rehearsals — as Merryweather had predicted — were testing to the last strand David's patience and good temper. A score of times, at least, he was tempted to walk out of the theatre and never return to it, but always Merryweather would whisper softly: "Be calm! Taffy pays the piper, and we must hop to his piping."

Taffy insisted upon Schmaltz being called in to write two songs. David protested.

"It's all right," said the wise Merryweather. "The public likes to see Schmaltz's name on the programme. Taffy has called upon Nokes to furnish the words. Nokes gets his little screw here, week in and week out, and he must do something."

"The confounded thing is turning into a hotch-potch."

"We have our agreement, and Taffy's spending a fortune upon the production. You'll have pots and pots to invest. Let your mind dwell on that."

Boileau and Daffy-down-Dilly said much the same thing in words even less academic.

"It's a knock-out," said the leading man. "That waltz, Dave, will hit 'em fair on the point. All London, not to mention New York, will be down and out."

"Look here, Dave," said the leading lady. "You don't seem to know a good thing when you see it. Taffy Williams says you're ungrateful. He's coining money for you."

"But I don't want the money!"

"Oh, Dave, come off! That's too thin."

Everybody called him — Dave!

Upon the eve of the production, Mary and he dined at Stormont Lodge, and sunned themselves in the smiles of many distinguished persons. Mary, for the first time, wore a gown fashioned by a great dressmaker, and, anticipating critical glances and supercilious smiles, was forced to admit that the swells had been most kind. In her way, she was as great a success as David. Her dimples, her freshness, and delight in the beautiful pictures and furniture enchanted Mrs. Stormont.

"You're the most delightful pair in the world," she said.

Driving to their lodging after this memorable dinner, David said gaily: "What part of London shall we live in?"

"David, are you thinking of leaving Sherborne?"

"Aren't you?"

"But father and the Looker-on?"

"We'll keep the cottage, and spend the summer there."

"Two houses?"

"Certainly. Mary, dear, you had a success to-night. The woman who made this gown must make lots of others. Mrs. Stormont whispered to me that she backed dimples against diamonds any day."

"Mrs. Stormont says too many nice things."

"She knows of a *maisonette* quite close to her, looking over the park."

"If you talk like this before the piece is produced——"

He laughed, and kissed her.

The dress rehearsal was an unforgettable experience. From beginning to end everything and everybody seemed to exhibit a "cussedness," which — so David was assured — indicated that all would go well at the *première*. It lasted from five in the afternoon till nearly midnight; and many well-meaning persons, more or less connected with the musical comedy world, deemed it to be their duty to offer advice to the great Taffy. To David's amazement, Taffy listened, perspiringly and eagerly, to the increasing resentment of producer, composer, librettist, scene-painter, stage-manager and the smaller fry: every man of whom believed that what he had done would command success. Of this seething syndicate Merryweather remained calm and cool and indifferent. His indif-

ference amazed David, worn out by the physical effort of conducting.

"Taffy is always like this," said the little man. "He's cutting some of our best stuff, but, bless you, he'll put it back. You see, to-night, he doesn't care a hang about us; he wants to find out what the public thinks."

"But everybody is in a boiling rage — except you."

"A stir-up does 'em no harm. They'll play for all they're worth to-morrow. You sit tight and smile."

"I can't," groaned David.

However, at supper afterward, he received many congratulations. Lorimer, the host, was positive that the elfin dance would carry the town off its feet. Taffy came in late, well pleased with himself, and inordinately thirsty.

"This drives men to drink," he observed to Mary.

"And women too," whispered Mary.

She had noticed that Miss Daffodil and the second leading lady were drinking much champagne. To her horror, Taffy said authoritatively:

"You little dears have had enough drink. It's no good my telling you it's bad for your morals, but perhaps you'll listen when I swear that it will ruin your complexions. Off you go to by-bye! And mind you turn up sober to-morrow, or there'll be trouble."

Miss Daffodil tossed her head as she refilled her glass. Obviously, she was furious with the omnipotent one, and was heard to say that she would tell him what she thought of him presently. Taffy went on talking

to Mary, pouring into her ears a torrent of explanations and criticisms, which she tried in vain to absorb and understand. Around her a battle of chaff was raging, and with every wish to play her small part she was sensible that she was "out of it" and never could be "in it" — except under protest, the stronger because suppressed. And the scene was as unreal as anything she had just witnessed at the Jollity: an absurd and vulgar travesty of life. Then she heard Taffy's voice saying:

"You're a good listener, Mrs. Archdale."

"I'm a back-seater — always was."

"But you'll have to take a front seat from now on."

She replied with a smile, inwardly quaking. The friendliness of these people made escape impossible. She wondered whether she would be called "Polly!" David, masquerading as "Dave," was hardly recognizable. With dismay, she heard him talking and laughing too loudly, acclaimed as "one of the boys!" Taffy whispered:

"You owe me an awful lot. I rescued Dave, and he knows it."

"But, Mr. Williams, musical comedy is not his line."

"My dear, dear lady!"

"He looks upon it as a means to an end."

"What end? The West End?" Taffy laughed loudly at his small joke.

"If he makes money, he will produce his oratorio."

At this Taffy exploded. But, perceiving the expression upon Mary's face, he became quiet and insistent.

He assured Mrs. Archdale that he was a man of sense with a nose for sniffing out talent. He quoted Lorimer in support of the contention that David was now doing his appointed work. "Oratorio? Good Lord!" Mary murmured confusedly: "It is magnificent." Taffy replied rudely: "Moody and Sankey," adding crushingly: "They'll take nothing else from him after to-morrow night. You mark that."

Later, alone with her husband, she realized that for the moment he was obsessed by the possibility of failure.

"Nobody knows," he said, "which way the cat will jump. The thing's a gamble. Of course they've rubbed it into me that I'm risking nothing."

"Nothing?"

"No money. Not one of them, not even Merryweather, thinks of anything else."

"David, dear," she pressed his arm, "for the last time I must tell you that the money is nothing to me. I'm afraid of it. I want you to succeed, but if success means hobnobbing with these people, I'm not sure that I wouldn't prefer failure."

"Failure? A second failure? It would kill me."

She heard his voice sob in his throat. Then he continued vehemently: "Do you suppose that I like these rowdy suppers any more than you do? I wanted to go to bed. Never felt so dog-tired in all my life. Lorimer insisted, insisted on your coming too. It's part of the game."

"That's it. I feel as if it is a sort of game, not real."

"It will be real enough to-morrow."

CHAPTER VIII

"THE PEER AND THE PERI"

ONE describes "The Peer and the Peri" quite adequately as an up-to-date transcript of "Pygmalion and Galatea," with the scene laid in Montmartre. Daffy-down-Dilly played the Peri, a model in a sculptor's studio. Boileau, as the Peer, a young art amateur, falls in love with a marble statue of the Peri, having never seen the original. The sculptor, the funny man, perpetrates a practical joke upon his noble patron. The statue is delivered, but the model has taken its place upon the pedestal, and in due time descends from it, a charming flesh-and-blood young woman. How Daffy, in the course of the second act, turns out to be a maiden of high degree may be left to the imagination. Plot in musical comedy is of no account whatever.

The curtain rose upon a crowded house. In addition to the usual first-nighters, might be seen well-known persons lured to the Jollity in search of a sensation. Everybody knew that the composer had been an organist, and the fact whetted interest and curiosity. The somebodies told the nobodies that a new star was about to rise above the horizon. Mrs. Stormont brought friends who were enthusiastic in pronouncing "When Cuckoos Call" the most beautiful song that had ever been written.

The box upon the prompt side of the stage was occupied by a much bediamoned struggler for Royal recognition. Gossip whispered that the lady had become a Roman Catholic because, as an earthly reward, certain great houses, and notably a ducal one, are thrown open to rich converts. An old bachelor, who attained social eminence by not dissimilar methods, affirmed that she had taken a passage to the Cape and back for no less worthy reason than the fact that a Serene Highness was announced as a passenger upon the same boat. Mrs. Stormont marked her smiles, her anxiety to be recognised by the right people, her inability to even see the wrong sort — from whom in salad days she had indiscreetly accepted invitations. By her side yawned her son, a fluffy, callow youth, who rode to hounds in terror of his life, because that also was the “right thing.” The brave fellow confessed to his mother that the Lord only knew how he suffered when he was out! One of the daughters — a chip, indeed, from the old block — had secured a husband by fainting opportunely upon a sheet of ice in front of a house whose owner refused to call upon *parvenus*. The son of that house had carried the lovely burden into the sacred precincts, where to-day she reigned as mistress. In the box opposite sat Mary, Sebastian Fermor, the Professor, and the Professor’s family. David, of course, was conducting.

The overture aroused expectation. Merryweather had entreated that it should not be too good. Stage effects, he contended, must be cumulative. But David

felt to his finger-tips that the audience thrilled when he introduced the elfin theme, although it was merely a faint and elusive shadow of the real dance. Taffy, in his box, with a couple of the Jollity directors beside him, said oracularly: "That's going to do the trick." Ten minutes later, Daffy tripped on. She smiled her famous picture post-card smile and began to sing.

This song scored the first success of the evening. The words were idiotic, but the music was delightful to any ear save that accustomed to the best. The Professor applauded, exclaiming, "How pretty!" and repeating the phrase as if nothing more could be said. Fermor thought of the solos in "Solomon's Garden." Across the theatre, Taffy might be seen gesticulating, promising better things to come to his directors. In the stalls the critics sat blandly impassive. Their faces hardly relaxed when the funny man appeared. This was the illustrious Tommy Trout, discovered by Taffy Williams in Leeds, and by virtue of his transcendent gifts able to command an income equal to that of the Bishop of London. Those in the cheaper parts of the house began to laugh before he opened his mouth, a reception which visibly impressed the directors, who had complained of the exorbitant salary exacted by Tommy.

"He's worth every penny of it, and more too," said Williams. "And, mind you, he'll be funnier and funnier every night. We've given the little beggar a free hand."

However, at the end of the first act, no tremendous success had been achieved. In the foyer, veterans like old Wrest and Thelluson and Bagshot were gathered together, with the youngsters around them, greedily picking up such crumbs as might fall from august lips.

“It’s coagulated piffle!” said Wrest, twisting his grizzled mustache, “but it’ll go for about eight months.”

“Tommy is a scream as usual,” said one of the youngsters, interrogatively.

“As usual,” repeated Wrest savagely. “And that’s why the idiots love him. He rubs in his old jokes so hard that the stupidest person in the audience sees them. Pah!”

Meantime, David was in his wife’s box listening to the Professor, who was optimistic and enthusiastic.

“It’s first-rate of its kind,” he asserted. “It supplies a legitimate demand. Confound intellectual snobbery! The men who produced this piece are as clever as any in England. *Allons donc*, we come here to laugh, my Marykins. Is it not so, *mon vieux*?”

He appealed to Fermor, who nodded.

“Let us take life as it is. I shout — bravo Strauss!”

He laughed genially, and clapped David on the shoulder.

Just then Williams entered the box. David introduced Fermor, and, as the others stopped talking, Williams said in his peculiar, grumbling, nasal tones: “I’ve seen Wrest. We’re all right if that dance comes off.”

As everybody except David stared at him, he added significantly: "She's not so drunk as I thought she was."

"Who is drunk?" demanded the Professor.

Taffy explained, without sparing anybody's feelings. When he stopped there was an odd little silence, during which David realized that he was blushing, because he could see into the minds of his wife and Fermor. The Professor saved an awkward situation with his cheery laugh.

"After all," he said, with a shrug of his broad shoulders, "she sings like a nightingale. My poor Dave, what you must have suffered!"

"What we have all suffered," said Williams. "When things are running smoothly I shall go to Buxton and let my suppressed rage ooze out of me. It's worse than gout."

He took David by the arm and led him away. In the passage outside, Mary could hear him swearing.

"What a life!" exclaimed the Professor. "Name of a pipe! What a life! "

The curtain went up, and the young men began to straggle back into the stalls. Whisky and cigarettes had stirred them to a beautiful enthusiasm. The performance of the now famous sextet was "warming," as Taffy put it. And then came the dance.

At once, the fascination of the opening bars produced a significant silence. Nobody was on the stage but the Peri. She stood listening, waiting for her lover, while moonbeams flickered upon her. Boileau

entered on tiptoe, stepping in time to the music, which was so faint as hardly to be audible. Daffy, seeing him, put her finger to her lips. For a minute at least they remained motionless, spellbound by the magic of the music. Hardly perceptibly, swayed to the rhythm of the waltz, with the wide stage between them, they glided forward. In the moonlight, their forms became shadowy and colourless. David lifted his hand, and the muted strings of the violins became absolutely mute. And then the haunting, intoxicating strain seemed to pronounce a benediction. Daffy stood with arms at her side, as Boileau, taking her head between his hands, began to dance. They moved backward and forward, noiselessly, the man gazing into the girl's face, which gradually relaxed, revealing the eternal surrender of beauty to youth. Immediately the *tempo* quickened. A sight of satisfaction quivered from the audience. Probably not a person present but felt a thrilling of the pulses. Wrest described the dance as a triumph of vibration. It bore the same relation to ordinary dances which statuary bears to painting. Not flesh and blood, but immaculate spirits seemed to have been materialized out of attenuated and sublimated sounds.

In silence the dancers vanished.

Those present will never forget what followed. Simultaneously, with deafening and overwhelming violence, the house roared its applause. Men and women stood up and shouted. From the gallery came a fog-horn note of delirious excitement.

Williams said to his directors, imperturbably, "This means a dazzling success."

Six times the dance was repeated.

After the curtain fell, the enthusiasm was even more amazing. The audience refused to leave the theatre until it had glutted its satisfaction upon everybody connected with the production. Taffy — cunning Welshman — arranged that David should appear last. He faced the huge crowd very pale, but smiling. To shouts of "Speech! Speech!" he replied with a nervous bow. The Professor, falling back upon his native tongue, kept on repeating: "*Le brave garçon! Le brave garçon! Bravo, mon fils, bravo!*" Again and again the audience clamoured for him, and then, when the curtain fell for the last time, the assembled company behind the scenes poured upon his stricken head congratulations and thanks. It was a great moment, hardly supportable when Taffy appeared leading Mary. The stage hands raised a cheer for Mrs. Archdale. Her face, dimpled with delight but with tears rolling down her cheeks, revealed the one thing needful. David kissed her, and the stage hands cheered again. Taffy wiped a heated brow.

"Let us go to supper," he said.

Upon the morrow, every critic affirmed that David Archdale had come to stay. The mightiest journal in the world proclaimed thunderously his right to style himself "Master of Melody." The paper with the largest circulation headed two columns with "Fame

and Fortune for David Archdale," and the explanatory line — "An organist comes into his own!" At the Jollity, the advanced booking eclipsed all previous records. To mark this memorable "first night" with red, Daffy-down-Dilly announced her intention of taking the pledge: a resolution which went, alas! to the paving of Hades.

Fermor returned to Sherborne with the Pignerols. In the train the Professor said, with many chucklings:

"Our dear genius has discovered a gold mine. What will he do with it?"

"I don't know," replied Fermor.

A fortnight later, the Archdales came back to the cottage. David said with a gay laugh: "By Jove, how small it looks!"

Next morning, they sat in the garden and talked of the oratorio. That must be finished at once. Nothing else was possible. Nevertheless, throughout the week that followed, constant interruptions prevented David from adding anything but a few bars to the score. Then business connected with the musical comedy summoned him to town. He rushed home to say that he had secured the *maisonette* commended by Mrs. Stormont, because, for some months at least, he must be within touch of Williams and Lorimer. After the season, he would be able to give undivided energy to his best work. Fermor acknowledged that "Solomon's Garden" exacted undivided energy; but he refused David's invitation to share prosperity, affirm-

ing that he could never leave his shabby lodgings. Alone in them he played a fugue of Bach. A presentiment overwhelmed him that the oratorio would not be finished.

Mary, meanwhile, was whirled off her feet by this springtide of fortune and popularity. Many things engrossed her: the furnishing of the *maisonette*, the entertaining of new friends, and the being entertained by them. Life seemed to have become a toboggan slide. David and she went flying through the air so swiftly that she was hardly conscious of anything except pace. This unaccustomed sense of speed made her dizzy, for she knew that she had outstripped the fond plans and aspirations of yesterday. Was it possible that she had dreamed away idle hours thinking of a rosy future when she might be able to afford a parlour-maid and a pony-cart? Shortly after the production of "The Peer and the Peri," David came home carrying a large bag full of sovereigns, which he emptied into her lap, explaining gaily that it was hers, the first-fruits of success, and adding that a shower of increasing copiousness might be expected every week for a couple of years at least. The musical comedy was about to be produced in New York, Paris, Vienna, and Berlin!

At the end of July they returned to the beloved garden. Many admitted reluctantly that it did not look quite the same. Alien hands had watered her roses. David declared that he could smell damp corduroys! Two London servants turned up con-

temptuous noses when they saw the pantry. Moreover, continuous rain drenched the month of August. David began work upon “Solomon’s Garden,” but to his dismay the former inspiration seemed to be lacking. Music came to him, the music of “The Peer and the Peri”: tinkling melodies which drove him distracted. And then Tom Merryweather arrived with a scenario entitled “The Belle and the Tiger,” which Lorimer and Williams insisted must be set to music by David. He refused again and again, but strong wills overpowered him. Finally — as Fermor had foreseen — he laid aside the score of the oratorio, saying that he would return to it as soon as the second musical comedy was finished. All over England bands and barrel organs were playing “The Peer and the Peri” waltz.

After Christmas the Archdales went back to London. The Marionette was now nearly seven years old, and quite able to appreciate the change in her environment. Mary began to perceive symptoms of swelled head. A Royal Academician asked leave to paint the child’s portrait, and during the sittings put too many chocolates into a small stomach and a superfluity of flattery into a small mind.

“She’s getting spoiled,” said Mary.

“She’s a perfect darling,” David replied. “Everybody says so.”

“I wish they wouldn’t say it to her face.”

“Pooh! Sugar is good for children.”

“It has agreed with you, David.”

“You look upon me as a child?”

She nodded, smiling. He had remained the golden youth, appealing irresistibly to maternal instincts. Often Mary felt years older than he, and at such times she wondered what would happen to him if she were taken away. Quite unconsciously he made multifarious demands upon a wife who pleaded that nature had intended her for a "back-seater." To please him, she wore smart gowns and accepted dozens of invitations. To please him, she pretended that all was well, when every bone in her body ached.

One night, at the end of the following season, he noticed that the bodice of her gown did not fit very tightly.

"Are you thinner?" he asked.

"A little," she replied.

He asked other questions, and became alarmed. She must consult a supreme authority. Mary entreated him not to fuss, but, next day, he made an appointment with a specialist in Harley Street, and took her to the great man himself.

"Your wife needs a rest, Mr. Archdale."

David mentioned that they were about to return to Sherborne.

"If I were you I should go to Spa instead. The chalybeate springs are rich in iron. The local man will prescribe. There is nothing to be alarmed about — nothing."

Alone with Mary, David said anxiously, "I can't account for this."

"We've been going so fast, David, and I'm a slow

coach. I've been trying to keep pace with you, and I suppose I can't."

"We'll be off to Spa at once."

After some discussion, it was decided to leave the Marionette with her grandfather. The Archdales intended to be absent at least six weeks, and perhaps longer. David talked gaily of a second honeymoon; and Mary, you may be sure, was delighted to discover that he really wished to be alone with her. Since his wonderful success there had been moments when jealousy lacerated her. Not that David was beguiled by prettier or cleverer women, but, insensibly, a shadow had crept between them, the old shadow of infinitesimal differences of temperament and taste. She saw that side of her husband which justified his being called Dave by Daffy-down-Dilly and Boileau and scores of others. She asked herself: "Is he my David or their Dave?" Mrs. Stormont answered the question when she said: "That wonderful husband of yours, my dear, is a man of many facets."

Such women as Mary can fight gallantly against a concrete jealousy, but an abstraction paralyzes them. The thought rankled that one day he might exact more than she could give. Her talents of thrift, patience, serenity, and the pleasure she had found in small things seemed to be hidden in a heap of gold. Secretly she grieved because she had only one child. She yearned for a son who would have resembled his father. The Marionette was a facsimile of herself. Once she had said to David:

"Are you vexed because I do not give you a son?"

David laughed and kissed her.

"What an idea! It's never entered my head."

"It's in my heart always."

"We may have half a dozen sons. But to me there will be one Mary and one Marionette."

Fermor came up to London to bid them good-bye. It happened that David was obliged to go out after dinner, and Fermor and Mary were left alone. They said little, but each was conscious that David's absence was significant, the more so because for business reasons he had been obliged, much against his will, to leave them. His empty chair became a detestable void. And in Fermor's kind eyes Mary seemed to read a pathetic protest against the fate which takes ruthlessly away, and leaves nothing behind but empty chairs. What had Fermor suffered when David left him?

"Are you lonely?" she asked.

"Sometimes," he answered, pressing the hand which she had slipped into his. Then he added gravely:

"I am lucky in having pleasant memories."

"If you could have come to London ——"

"My dear, that was impossible for me."

"I shall tell you a secret; there are moments when London seems impossible to me."

"Mary!"

His distress convinced her that if she understood him, he was far indeed from understanding her.

"What do you mean?"

"I dislike noise and excitement."

"I thought, I hoped, I made sure that you would find it such fun."

"Fun!"

"David revels in it."

"Yes. I try to be glad that it is so. Prosperity has fattened him; I'm skin and bone. Of course I'm a fool. I can say to you, dear Looker-on, that I've worn myself out running after David instead of sitting at home. You see, I wanted to share his fun, even if it wasn't fun to me."

"Yes, yes." He sighed and then spoke reassuringly: "You will come back strong and well, and David's fun will be fun for you."

"And if I should not come back?"

"Mary!"

"If it is right, as father says, to think of what may happen, it is right, surely, to speak of it — to a friend. The mention of death distresses David; he regards death as darkness, a blotting-out. To me it is just the opposite — light. You must know that this world would become very dark to me, if ——"

"If ——"

"If, through ill-health, or—or incompatibility of tastes, I was not able to share David's life. None of the married people we know here are united. Most of them seem to be drifting farther and farther apart. I would sooner die than have that happen to David and me."

Fermor gazed at her in silence. She perceived that he had taken her seriously, that he was

incapable of hurling cheap banalities at her head. She continued:

"The inevitableness of it seems so cruel. Is it the price that must be paid for a great worldly success?"

"Yes," Fermor replied with finality. "I have always interpreted that text about the rich man and the eye of the needle as applicable to the heaven that is on earth, the heaven that lies about us, the heaven in which we have played as children. Into that heaven it is difficult indeed for the rich to go."

"We are rich, and we shall be richer. The money pours in from the uttermost ends of the earth. I believe there are thirty companies playing 'The Peer and the Peri'."

With an effort, Fermor confronted thirty companies piling up mountains of gold for David.

"Is it really as bad as that?" he murmured. "Has he said anything about finishing 'Solomon's Garden'?"

Mary fidgeted.

"I don't think he can finish it now."

"I knew it."

"'The Belle and the Tiger' is already roughed out."

"Well, well, circumstance is too strong for most of us. Meanwhile, nothing matters except your health. Smile and grow fat."

"I shall do my best. And if anything should happen to me, you'll keep an eye on Marionette. Don't let people spoil her."

"I should do my best," he answered evasively.

Fermor accompanied them as far as Dover on the following day. And he stood upon the Admiralty pier, watching the swiftly receding boat till it became a blur of smoke upon the horizon. He wondered afterward why his eyes had lingered on Mary rather than on David. The contrast between them had hurt him. He was sensible of a conviction that the stronger physically and intellectually had taken something from the weaker which could never be given back. Dominating this conviction was the realization of Mary's spirituality, so much more vital than that of her husband's, which long ago Fermor had recognized as her superlative possession. As he turned his face from the sea he muttered:

“My God! If she should not come back!”

CHAPTER IX

THE WATERS OF MARAH

THE Archdales spent a delightful month at Spa. Within a fortnight roses and dimples came back to Mary's cheeks. Once more the Professor's dictum, that prayers were answered if one prayed hard enough, was abundantly demonstrated. Mary had prayed that David might be wholly hers, and throughout this month he hardly left her side. Together they made expeditions to Franchimont, the Cascade de Cou, Malmédi, and Sart. And then, one night at table d'hôte, some stranger began to talk enthusiastically of the Ardennes. To go there after the cure, or not to go, became a question to be settled by the toss of a coin. Neither David nor Mary wished to leave Spa. They were happy and comfortable in their hotel. Ultimately they went reluctantly, because they had elected to abide by the verdict of chance.

The stranger had commended a certain pension, a picturesque cottage standing in a pretty garden, in which David was destined to pass the happiest and the most wretched hours of his life. Upon arrival, he declared that Arcadia had been found, that the forest would inspire a symphony of sighing pines and whispering grasses. He hummed airs which flitted in and out of his head, and then played them upon a

jingly piano which stood in the small salon. He became again the purist and enthusiast. The spaciousness and silence enchanted him. He sent for the score of "Solomon's Garden" and swore that he would not leave the Ardennes till it was finished. So engrossed did he become in his work that he hardly noticed the curious langour which seemed to have fastened itself upon Mary.

The truth burst upon him with stunning violence. She had contracted typhoid fever.

At the end of a second week, Fermor arrived, bringing with him a Brussels doctor, a man of international reputation. The infection was traced to a cup of milk, drunk by Mary at a farm near the Chateau of the Quatre Fils d'Aymon. David remembered that he had suggested milk as being safer to drink than water from the shallow well in the middle of a farmyard. It was torment to reflect that the peasants at the farm, ungainly, stupid, with heavy animal faces, should dare to live when Mary lay a-dying. For, after the twenty-first day, it became, humanly speaking, certain that she must die.

"Can nothing be done?"

Fermor shook his head.

"If — if a miracle happened, she could never get really well; she would be miserably weak as long as she lived — a wreck."

David felt the pressure of Fermor's hand, and was unable to return it. He felt also the sympathy of one who had been as father and mother to him: flowing

toward him and over him, but not through him. He knew that Fermor would have laid down his life, gladly, if he, the tired man, could have been taken and the young vigorous woman left. But such knowledge turned his heart to ice.

“I persuaded her to drink that milk.”

“My son, put such thoughts from you for ever.”

“If I could ——”

He spoke apathetically. Something seemed to have snapped within him. Fermor dared not look at his face.

There was no parting, no last words. Toward the end, David, remembering Mary’s fervent belief in prayer, fell upon his knees beside her bed and entreated Omnipotence to stretch forth his hand. And, in answer to his supplication, a sigh of protest seemed to flutter from Mary’s lips, and her thin hands lying motionless upon the counterpane moved spasmodically, as if she were pushing life from her. David rose from his knees.

She died at two in the morning, passing easily to the other side. An hour afterward, when David saw her again, a soft smile lay upon her face. When David saw that smile, he locked the door. She had promised to return, if return were possible. . . .

He said in a whisper:

“Mary.”

The draught from the open window may have made the flame of the lamp flicker, but David thought that the smile upon his wife’s face had changed. It seemed

to express derision. Outside, the stars twinkled as derisively.

He went to the window. She would come — if she came, and already the doubt tormented him — not from the emaciated body abandoned and about to decay. Across the mountains, black against the luminous sky, through the pines which were singing her requiem, she would bear the celestial message of everlasting life. Out of incorruption his Mary would rise from the dead.

Upon just such a night they had stood together upon the high moorland of the New Forest, bride and groom. He could see her face, her radiant eyes, the dimples in her cheek. And, even then, in the springtime of youth and happiness, some instinct had told her that she would be the first to go.

He saw her again as the little girl to whom he had plighted troth beneath the mulberry tree. She had been his first love and his only love, dearer to him than all the women who had ever lived.

Because of that she would come back.

Presently, he knelt down, still gazing beyond the trees at the point where the highest mountain defined itself against the horizon. She had never failed him; would she fail him now, when he wanted her with a yearning so intense that his own spirit seemed to be upon the point of leaving the flesh?

The sighing of the pines was as the soft murmur of tiny waves breaking upon the sands of time.

How long did he kneel there? He never knew.

Fermor, waiting in apprehension upon the other side of the locked door, was counting the minutes, not daring to articulate the skeleton fear that obsessed him.

When at last the door opened and David stood before him, the fear that lay cold about his heart began to take a monstrous form.

David passed without word or glance. Fermor followed swiftly. They entered the small salon whose tall windows opened upon the garden.

"David?"

"Well?"

The men faced each other. David stood near the piano. Upon the top of it lay the score of the oratorio.

"Two things are left to you," said Fermor slowly.

"What things?"

"Our love and your work."

"My work!"

He saw the sheets of music, seized them, and was about to tear them to pieces, when Fermor took them.

"Do you propose to tear up our love?"

David answered coldly: "Mary has not come back." Then, in the same chill monotone, but speaking swiftly, he added: "I was a fool to believe she would. They never come back. Not one, not — one."

"Christ came back."

"What a fairy tale! Mary is dead and I am dead!"

"You will live again in Mary's child." As he spoke, Fermor realized that David had forgotten the existence of his daughter. Then, with inspiration, he added: "As I have lived in you."

“What do you say?” He struggled to grasp Fermor’s meaning. “Am I to understand that you have felt what I feel?” He stared at the quiet face, so familiar and so little changed. Then he continued: “You never married; you never loved a woman.”

“That is true,” Fermor replied with austerity. “But I loved love. Before you came, I can remember telling myself that I was dead, that the years could hold nothing more for me. My ambitions, not strong and vital like yours, had become ashes; my health had failed; I stood alone, drinking the dregs of disappointment. And they poisoned me. I have never spoken of it. I did not think it was possible to speak of it, even to you.”

“And I made you live?”

The tone was incredulous, but some quality, hitherto absent, animated it.

“You raised me from the dead. You will never understand that, it’s impossible that you should, until you live in and for another.”

“I lived for Mary.”

“My poor David, are you sure of that?”

“I cannot live without her.”

His voice became again hard and defiant. He glanced at the open window. Fermor could see what was in his mind.

“Because Mary is not permitted to return, you are thinking of following her. David, you will not find her that way.”

“How can you know?”

“I do know.”

He spoke with authority, tightening his grip upon David's hand. In a different tone, using the pleasant, never didactic inflections which years before had made David not only willing but eager to obey him, Fermor continued:

"You are an honourable man. You pay your debts. You owe me something."

"Everything — everything. Even Mary."

"Do you realize that your self-destruction would kill me?"

"Father!"

"It is true."

David said in a low voice: "I have been mad." Then, with impatience, he added: "Will you come with me? I must walk. I must breathe fresh air. I am choking."

He hurried out, followed by Fermor. Side by side and in silence they took the open road, which to the left descended sharply, and to the right ascended as sharply to the crest of a high hill. Years before, upon the morning when Fermor adopted David, the choice between the hill and the plain had presented itself. Now, as then, David chose the hill. Fermor recalled that ascent to Jerusalem: he could hear the child's joyous laugh and feel the small hand thrust confidently into his own. It was morning, then, and summer was chasing spring from the landscape. Now, it was night and autumn. In the chill air hung the faint but unmistakable odour of decay. The leaves were falling from the trees.

David walked fast, and Fermor kept pace not without effort. But, suddenly, David paused and said with compunction: "I have been rushing along without considering you. Forgive me!"

Fermor was in the mood to give to these simple words a wider and deeper application. He replied gaspingly: "Let me take your arm."

Did David perceive that Fermor was deeply moved? The younger man's consideration at such a moment seemed to be a divinely inspired answer to some sorrowful questions. From the day of his adoption till the day when the Archdales left Sherborne, the relations between these two had been amazingly satisfactory. How dear and soul-sufficing are the tiny acts of love and thoughtfulness which a grateful child can offer to a devoted parent! How tragic it is to see these withheld! David had not withheld such sweet oblations, and again and again Fermor had laughed to himself, reflecting that the Vicar had suggested the possibility of his "being let down!"

To-night, the possibility so scorned had taken place. David had torn Fermor's heart. He had shewn that he could "do" without Fermor. But he had confessed afterward that he was mad.

Arm in arm, they reached the crest of the hill.

The world about and beneath lay without form and colour; dawn was at hand. In the east, a soft silvery radiance floated up behind the hills, accentuating the stern rigidity of their black gloom, the solemnity of their everlasting loneliness. Nowhere, in Namur,

do the mountains rise to a height greater than two thousand feet, and for the most part they present wooded and rounded contours, distinctively pastoral and Arcadian. Only here and there a sharp peak breaks the graceful curves, giving to the landscape the mountain note of passion and power. The general expression is that of undulation and harmony. And this, quite unconsciously, had been embodied in David's oratorio. He had seized, with true artistry, the flowing lines ever rising and falling in curves which possessed a common vanishing-point, and this subtle, rippling effect of form he had transposed into sound. But now, in the dark hour which precedes dawn, all was obscure. The breeze passed, leaving the singing pines silent. Out of the gorge below ascended the plaintive cadence of water escaping from confining rocks.

David stood still.

"Perhaps," he whispered, "Mary will come now. Pray, pray that it may be so."

Fermor felt David's arm rigid as iron against his own. At the moment he believed that Mary might come back, that her spirit could hardly resist such passionate importunity. Surely time and place presented tremendous claims. David and he stood far from human habitations, above the fret and fury of fleshly desires, alone and together in a communion of the spirit.

But Mary did not come.

Beyond the hills the light increased, and colour began to inform it, opaline at first, a scintillating,

crystalline admixture of ineffable tints. The edge of a cloud caught a crimson ray and held it captive. Gold glittered upon the crest of the most distant peak.

Fermor said to David:

“I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly.”

David, haggard and dry-eyed, answered hoarsely: “The world is alive, but my Mary is dead.”

“She lives,” said Fermor, almost with violence. “Can you look at that and doubt?”

He pointed to the sun, rising in stainless majesty: the ever-recurrent miracle, the sublime assurance of Man’s resurrection. The myriad rays streamed upon the awakening earth; changing the meanest and darkest objects into things of beauty and glory. Moss and lichen, fern and leaf, tiny pebble and vast boulder, forest, mountain, and stream, became, each in its degree, organic parts of a transcendent whole. And over land and sky brooded the peace that passes man’s understanding only because he is engrossed with his own works, great or small, and blind to the works of God, and to the gospel which each reveals.

David made no answer. The sun shone upon his face, white and hard as marble, upon his clenched hands, upon his rigid form, upon his tearless eyes in which defiance and despair seemed to smoulder dully.

“Leave me, please,” he said.

Fermor obeyed in silence, knowing that the worst could not happen, but knowing also that the best, the supreme opportunity, had come and gone.

CHAPTER X

AT THE ARCHDALE ARMS

THREE months after Mary's death, David returned to London, looking to the discerning eye older and thinner. The "Peer and the Peri" was still running at the Jollity with undiminished vigour and popularity. The "profession" received him with effusion, tempered by sympathy; and this cordiality — to which he responded — made him realize that he belonged to a world which works (and sometimes weeps) in order that others may laugh. Hitherto, he had felt that he was in this world, but not of it. Between Sebastian Fermor's adopted son and such persons, let us say, as Boileau, Williams, and Daffy-down-Dilly stretched an Atlantic of differences, waves upon which he had tossed, feeling at times uncomfortably sea-sick. He had told himself that wide oceans must be crossed in life's journey, and then, like many another philosophic traveller, thought of the good dry land whereon he would walk upright.

Without extenuation, let the fact be set down that David chose the baser sort to be his companions. In the same spirit of indifference and recklessness Captain Archdale had so chosen before him. It is easy to know the baser sort, and difficult to escape from them. David might have found friends amongst the best,

but he was aware that this would demand an effort. The second-raters, good, bad, and indifferent, accepted him upon his own terms. They wanted him and told him so: an insidious form of flattery. Also, they were accessible at all hours. David was suffering from insomnia. Had he been wise, he would have compelled sleep by exhausting his body with hard physical exercise. Instead, he joined a couple of clubs crowded with cheery, thirsty fellows till three in the morning. One night, the craving for sleep drove him to the use of drugs. Under their influence he had a vision of Mary, a Mary with horror in her eyes. When he became himself, he pitched the drugs out of the window. After this experience he hoped that Mary might come back in his dreams, with some whisper of solace and encouragement. Such happiness was denied to him. In a few dreams he had, she remained incalculably distant, unapproachable. He consulted, with a sense of disgust, certain mediums, through whom "communications" were transmitted, but the messages, trite, crude, and more than once offensively vulgar, might have come from a housemaid, never from Mary. He admitted that there were phenomena in connection with these *séances* which seemed inexplicable, although hardly more so than the avowed "tricks" of Messrs. Maskelyne and Devant. And he was assured that he came to darkened "parlours" in the wrong spirit, which was not so. He was seeking the truth, but he sought it in the wrong place.

At the end of a few years he had accepted a material

creed, the creed of his innumerable acquaintance. Sleep and health came back to him, and with them an increased appetite for work and the results of work. The "Belle and the Tiger," which succeeded the "Peer and the Peri," enjoyed a colossal success. It became impossible for David to enter a restaurant without hearing one of his compositions. Regimental bands played his marches; Young England, male and female, warbled his songs; his waltzes were inscribed upon every ball programme throughout the world. There were "David Archdale" ties and collars and cigars and roses!

Universal recognition not only tickled agreeably his vanity, but became in time as necessary as bread or wine.

And, meanwhile, amongst a motley company of actors, singers, dancers, writers, and painters, of whom it might be said that each lived, as joyously as possible, in and for the passing hour, the daughter of Mary was changing from a child into a woman.

Of course, she had ceased to be the Marionette. We meet her now as Mollie, a young lady who, for several years, and by many hundreds of persons, had been made to understand that she held an unassailable position in the heart of her father and his friends.

David adored her.

Everybody knew it, and took advantage of it. A "chorister" out of a job at the Jollity Theatre

was certain to be engaged if she was clever enough to approach David through Mollie. Students of singing and dancing were sure of the popular composer's attention, if Molly chose to play their accompaniments. A discreet present to Mollie was paid for ten times over by David.

Mollie remembered vividly the night when her father had come back, looking so white and thin. She was staying at the time with the Professor, hitherto regarded as a "jokey" man, full of quips and surprises, and with large bulgy pockets in which might be found chocolate and acidulated drops. Being then but seven years old, the shock of her mother's death had made only a temporary impress. Moreover, the Professor habitually spoke of death as a change for the better. Very tenderly, he had explained to the child that the mother, although invisible, was still alive. In a score of ways he appealed to a sensitive imagination. He bought a bottle of scent for her, and explained that flowers lived again in perfume, although, as blossoms, they had vanished. He possessed many objects made by Mary. He showed each to the child, saying: "The hands that made this are gone, but the love which guided the hand remains. We can forget the love, but even then it is there, waiting for us to remember it." By such talk, death was presented without terrors. And there had been no funeral to arouse, with its barbaric trappings of woe, nightmare imaginings of a beloved body buried in the cold earth. Mary lay in the English cemetery at Spa. But when the child

saw her father, instinctively she realized that something tragic had taken place. He arrived late, when she was in bed. But she heard his step upon the stairs, and with a glad cry rushed to meet him. She had expected to be smothered with kisses, the kisses which — so she said to her grandfather — had been growing for three months. David picked her up, and held her at arms' length, staring into her eyes, searching for the Mary who had vanished, trembling with fear lest what he sought might once more elude him.

"Yes, yes," he muttered. "Mary is there, a part of her at any rate."

"Daddy, what's the matter? How odd you look!"

He did not answer, but kissed her hungrily, straining her to him, and presently, as he sat beside the bed, holding her hand, she perceived that tears were rolling down his cheeks, and that he was unaware of this, for they fell unheeded upon his coat, while he talked lightly of his travels and a rough passage across the Channel. For the first time in her life the child peered beneath the obscuring veil of words and saw sorrow masquerading as mirth. And with this vision came the realization that her father was "pretending," hiding, or trying to hide — for he had failed miserably — his true self. With the tears welling into her own eyes, she wondered:

"Why does daddy laugh when he wants to cry?"

But, unhappily, she was too frightened to ask aloud a question which might have broken down barriers.

Behold the child a young lady of seventeen! You will note at once the resemblance to the mother. But whereas Mary had been merely "nice-looking," Mollie was a beauty. She flew the red, white, and blue, inheriting from David the fine texture of skin, the delicate features, the nicely proportioned form. She had her mother's brown hair, but, brightening it delightfully were golden threads of the same tint and quality as the curl which Fermor cut from David's head the day after he had adopted the child. Her eyes were azure; her hands and feet were slenderly fashioned.

Fermor often wondered how it came to pass that with parts so different the whole should resemble the mother so startlingly. Mollie had Mary's ways: tricks of gesture and expression. Mary seemed to reveal herself in the child's glance, in her smile, in dimples reproduced with absolute fidelity, most of all in her voice.

Never forgetting his promise to Mary, Fermor tried to "keep an eye" on Mollie. But he had promised more than he could perform. And his eyesight, in more senses than one, was failing. He defined with difficulty those objects only which were close. Mollie in London, surrounded by hosts of friends, became a whirling blur revolving at such a high rate of speed that by the mere exercise of centrifugal force she unconsciously discarded influences alien to her vigorous personality.

Long ago, David had left the *maisonette* for a "mansion" in Portland Place, a fine old house with

stately rooms admirably designed for the exercise of a lavish hospitality. Mrs. Stormont christened it "The Archdale Arms." She remained David's friend, although she complained of the people she met at his house. Opening wide her own doors to everybody in London, irrespective of birth or money, who represented credentials of talent or intelligence, she had, at the same time, displayed marvellous discrimination in excluding the humbugs and the ill-bred.

We meet her again in David's drawing-room, upon the eve of Mollie's eighteenth birthday. Her hair is gray, her figure rather more massive; otherwise she is unchanged.

"Definite purpose fires your eye," said David, as they shook hands.

"Quite right. I have come to talk to you about Mollie."

"My weak spot."

"Exactly. I have always regretted, David, that you didn't marry again. For that matter, it's not too late. I'm sure Kate Melbury would have you."

"Kate and I are still pals, although I see little of her."

"That is your fault. Kate is fastidious. She abominates most of your friends as much as I do."

David shrugged his shoulders.

"You assume an indifference which ill becomes a father."

"Perhaps it is assumed."

"Oh — ho!"

"When Mollie comes out there must be some weeding."

"If you wait till then, my dear man, it will be too late. And it's rubbish to talk of Mollie's coming out. She is out. She has always been out. I've come here to insist upon Mollie's coming-in."

"A finishing school?"

"If you like to call Stormont Lodge that, I shall not be offended. Lend her to me for a year."

David uttered a gasp of surprise.

"Lend you my Mollie for a year?" he repeated incredulously.

"Yes."

"This is very kind of you."

"It is — wonderfully kind. I suppose I've got a conscience somewhere, and it pricks me whenever I look at you. There are moments when I wonder what your life would have been if I had not meddled with it. I did meddle — deliberately. And the result — Well, it has not turned out quite as I expected, nor, I fancy, as you expected."

"That's true," said David gloomily.

"You have climbed to the top of the tree, but ——"

"It's the wrong tree."

"It might have been a mountain peak. Now, can I speak with absolute candour?"

"Yes."

"You have a daughter whom you have done your best to spoil. Don't interrupt me! You imagine that the feeling between you both is the real right thing,

but it isn't. You believe your love to be unselfish. Nothing of the sort. Unless I am making a criminally unintelligent blunder, Mollie is and has been to you not a young girl of human clay, but a sort of lay figure upon which you have draped a robe of samite. It makes you feel good to look at your dear little saint, and it pleases you enormously to exhibit her to the multitude, as if she were Our Lady de Bonnes Nouvelles exalted above the heads of the unwashed and the infirm."

"But ——"

"I am wound up, and I must finish. I have rehearsed this scene; I'm word perfect. You have never really entered into Mollie's life; she has never entered into yours."

"What exaggeration!"

"Test my statement. Do you talk to her of your work, your cares, of your health, of what you believe or disbelieve?"

David was silent.

"Does she tell you, day by day, her changing views of life? Does she whisper to you her troubles, her girlish hopes and fears? Can you name her favourite hero, her cardinal virtue, her besetting sin? Could you write out a synopsis of her character and tastes and disabilities?"

"I love her devotedly and she loves me," he replied.

"We are always happy together. That is my test."

"Are you together much?"

"Not as much as I could wish."

"Will you lend her to me?"

"Ha-ha! I have you now. You talk of tests. Mollie is so happy here that she wouldn't go. Your offer is the kindest in the world, but horses wouldn't drag Mollie from Portland Place."

"My horses shall do so, if I am given the chance. Let Mollie decide."

"All right. It's courting a rather humiliating refusal. You can offer lures ——"

"Lures?" She interrupted him sharply. "I can teach the child what she will never learn in this house."

"What is that?"

"The difference between a gentleman and a bounder. Don't frown! You think she knows that much at least. Well, she doesn't. How should she? And, if she finds out, she's quite likely to prefer the bounder."

"What?"

"Keep cool! The bounders I meet here are clever. That's why you ask them. But the gentlemen, my friend, are rather dull. They come to be amused by your clever bounders. I want to show Mollie some clever gentlemen."

David stared at her shrewd, masterful face. She was a woman of the world, a woman of experience. Also, she looked at this moment portentously serious. Hesitatingly, he admitted that he had not given sufficient thought to the future, that perhaps she was right.

"Upon these matters I am always right," said Mrs. Stormont.

"All the same Mollie will refuse to leave me."

Mrs. Stormont smiled, much to the irritation of David. It seemed to him that she was mocking at the thing he held most sacred — his love for Mary's daughter. Mrs. Stormont, of course, was a cynic, altogether a kindly one, and habitually she railed against sentiment, which — so she contended — blinded and confounded the majority of her countrymen. But it would be fatuous to question her worldly wisdom, and he realized with a shock that the gentlemen who came to his house were dull. Men of distinction dropped in and dropped out. As a rule they came without their wives. Since Mary's death, David had prided himself upon the fact that his house was a hotel for men of talent. And indeed he had been extraordinarily kind to the strivers and strugglers, particularly generous to young musicians and actors. From such seed as "fivers" slipped into emaciated hands, and innumerable dinners warming the cockles of chilled hearts, he had reaped an immense popularity, which in turn warmed him. With a sigh, and a slightly defiant glance, he continued:

"You can ask Mollie here and now, before me."

"So be it."

When the girl entered, she kissed Mrs. Stormont, and then, crossing to her father, stood by his chair with her hand resting lightly upon his shoulder. David smiled confidently, anticipating a small triumph. He felt grateful to his old friend, but really she seemed to

have misapprehended the nature of the tie which bound a father to a daughter. Poor dear woman! She was childless. That accounted for so much. He was still smiling when he said:

“Mrs. Stormont has come here to see you.”

Mollie crossed to Mrs. Stormont. A slight frown flickered across David’s forehead. There are moments when the tiniest action or gesture or even the inflection of a word becomes stupendously significant. David had never noticed that this was a trick of Mollie’s, this graceful flitting from one person to another, this bird-like fluttering to the call.

“I want your father to lend you to me for this season.”

“How awfully kind of you,” said Mollie.

She bent down and kissed Mrs. Stormont’s cheek. David winced. Suddenly he reflected that Mollie had always been too free with her kisses. True, she was very affectionate, but kisses — if regarded as coin available for the payment of debts of kindness — ought to be apportioned carefully. He saw that Mollie’s delicate hand rested upon Mrs. Stormont’s shoulder as confidently as it had rested upon his own. And she looked down upon the shrewd, genial, massive face with beaming eyes.

“Would you like to be presented by me, child?”

David stirred in his chair, leaning forward.

“I should love it,” exclaimed Mollie, enthusiastically.

“Oh, Daddy, isn’t it a wonderful surprise?”

“Yes,” said David with a laugh, “it is — wonderful!

You can run away," he continued. "I'll settle the details with Mrs. Stormont, but she wished to hear from your own lips whether you were really keen about it."

"Of course, I'm keen," said Mollie.

She ran gaily from the room, and David rose and went to the window. Outside, a barrel organ was playing the now hackneyed waltz out of "The Peer and the Peri." This incident can hardly be termed a coincidence. The *organari*, and in particular those who came from Ireland, were scrupulous in rendering tribute to the Cæsar of musical comedy. If David happened to be at home, it was accepted as such, and suitably acknowledged.

David flung open the window and looked out. The man at the organ was very dark; he supported a red silk *fazzoletto* on his head; in his ears were small gold rings.

"Is that you, Barney?"

"It is, sorr," replied a rich Corkian voice.

David flung the man a shilling.

"Take that, cross the road, and play my waltz in front of Mr. Isidore Schmaltz's house."

David closed the window, and turned to see an astonished pair of eyes.

"When I'm hit hard," he murmured, "I like to touch up somebody else. Puerile — eh?"

"You are very human," murmured Mrs. Stormont. Then, she put out her hand and added gravely: "I am sorry, but you mustn't blame Mollie. You have

left her too much alone; and she is ambitious; and she wants — and needs — change.”

When Mrs. Stormont had gone, David said to himself, passionately: “My God! Why does Mary’s child fail me?”

Why had Mollie failed him?

We have tried to show two sides of David’s character. Like many artists, he was governed by his affections and ambitions. His best music, which the world had never heard, expressed what was best in him. The music acclaimed by millions expressed what was second-best, and everything below that — strength and weakness. Perhaps the essential difference between the music of “The Peer and the Peri” and “Solomon’s Garden” was this:—the musical comedy set forth sparkingly David’s emotional side, his sense of colour and form, his joy in life and light, and his remarkable genius in being able to transpose his feelings into sound; the oratorio, on the other hand, expressed this, and much more. For in its composition David had soared above himself, above ordinary life, into an empyrean of selflessness truly infinite and divine.

“Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.”

This, Mary’s suggestion for the opening recitative, indicated David’s original attitude, his appeal to what was without rather than within. All great music, all enduring literature, everything, in short, which is destined to live, must possess and exhibit a quality

which even the illiterate are constrained to recognize as unearthly and from hence.

Fermor knew this, and knew also with conviction that David's genius, if beguiled from higher to lower things, would build upon shifting sand instead of solid rock, and that in time the sand must engulf both work and worker.

Did David know it?

Not yet.

He was afloat upon a high tide, with every stitch of canvas set to a spanking breeze. With the full of wind and tide he would find himself upon the Goodwin Sands of a facile success, sinking into it, choked by it — derelict!

And, already, signs were not wanting to show that the tide was flowing less freely, that the wind was beginning to fail. The critics were still kind, but they complained that Archdale's later work fell short of his own standard. Two musical comedies in succession, produced at enormous expense, were taken off at the end of a six months' run, much to the discontent of the Jollity Board of Directors. His songs, waltzes, and marches were still immensely popular, but a new star was rising in Hungary and — according to Lorimer — likely to shine with even greater brilliancy than David Archdale. Isidore Schmaltz, meeting David at the rising star's *première*, quoted malevolently:

“So have I heard on Afric's burning shore
Another lion give a grievous roar,
And the first lion thought the last a bore.”

David had laughed. Jealousy, which rends so many artists, never lacerated him. Always he had been ready to praise the work of other men, and to perceive what was best in it; a generous gift denied to most musicians, who too often are self-absorbed and vain. Perhaps he was jealous of himself, and secretly exasperated because his first musical comedy was held to be his best: the high-water mark by which subsequent productions were measured. In fine, so far as ambition was concerned, we must admit disappointment, and an inordinate appetite to taste once more a superlative triumph.

What of his affections?

During many months after Mary's death the power of loving seemed to have been taken away. He could analyze love with detachment, and place an inestimable price upon it, because he had lost it. For a season even Fermor and Mollie became negligible quantities. He could no longer think of them as his, although it is likely that he clung to the conviction that he remained theirs. This conviction fortified him, when he was tempted to drown misery in wine, or in the company of light women. Had he been vicious as a young man, he must have fallen to the depths, but vice repelled him. The possibility of buying love seemed the horror of horrors, an unthinkable abomination.

Later he had thought more than once of a second marriage. But inevitably he compared the dead wife with her possible successor, to the disadvantage of the

living woman. Comparing, also, his married life with that of his many friends, he could not escape the conclusion that he had been amazingly fortunate; and he told himself reluctantly — for he was still young and ardent — that an unhappy marriage would not only be a disaster in itself, but would stain the record of the first.

We find him, therefore, while still under forty-five, concentrating his affections upon his daughter, and his ambitions upon a triumph which would eclipse that memorable first night of the "Peer and the Peri."

Why had Mollie failed him?

He was unable to perceive that the fault lay with himself. He had gratified childish whims; he had lavished upon her material things and the tenderest caresses. He would have died for her, had such a sacrifice been demanded. In fine he had given so much that she was beginning to hanker after what was not in David's power to bestow: a triumph in Mayfair. Moreover, it was true that he did not know either her favourite hero (which modesty may have prevented him from naming to Mrs. Stormont) or her besetting sin (whose existence he may have questioned). There are thousands of just such fathers in the world's greatest city.

CHAPTER XI

DAVID ASKS QUESTIONS

WHEN Mollie left her father's house, a vacuum was created. David had just cut loose from Taffy Williams; although a comedy of his was still running at the Jollity Theatre. The pressmen, with that indifference to fact which distinguishes and some time extinguishes them, affirmed that the separation was amicable. But everybody knew that a row had taken place.

David, indeed, was tired of Taffy and his methods. He contended that the British Public was tired also, but this — according to Merryweather — remained to be demonstrated.

At this crisis in David's life, the choice between great and small once more presented itself. Freed from shackles which had fettered him not the less because they were golden, he was in a position to take up his early aspirations, and to give them a run — so to speak — with money which he had desired to earn for that purpose. To produce "Solomon's Garden" at the Albert Hall, to submit it as a magnificent answer to critics who contended that he was unable to write anything of better quality than "The Peer and the Peri" might secure a colossal triumph, and a niche in the Temple of Fame. But the possibility of a failure as

colossal terrified him. He belonged to a famous club, the Buskin, and was one of its most popular members. The Buskin prides itself upon infallible judgment concerning everything connected with the theatrical world. And certainly the collective wisdom of its representatives is not to be gainsaid. Men like old Wrest and Thelluson, who were writing dramatic criticism when the Bancrofts played at the Haymarket Theatre, had laid down axioms which permeated club talk and thought. These, for the most part, were negative and pessimistic, such as: "The public does not know a good thing when it sees it," or, "The public goes to the theatre to be amused, not to be instructed," or, "The best work of this generation may be accepted by our grandchildren." Sometimes, after luncheon, under the influence of the best tobacco and the club's old brandy, there might be found a few enthusiasts who thought more kindly of the Public, but these, newly joined members as a rule, were soon talked down if Wrest happened to be present. The old man exploited a remarkable memory. He inundated you with lamentable details concerning fine work that had failed, of men hounded to poverty and suicide because they were ahead of their times. Every word was trenchant. Whenever he finished, there was a brisk demand for fresh cigars and more drinks, to clear the pea-soup fog settling down upon a company of which each man, in his line, might reckon himself successful, and in his soul more or less sensible that under happier conditions he might have done better

work. The motto of the Buskinites was "Hold fast to substance, beware of shadow!" The most distinguished members, barristers, actors, dramatists, novelists and painters, writhed uneasily thinking of Christmas bills. Convention and fashion had enthralled them. Harrington, for instance, the Royal Academician, admitted with genial frankness that a diminution of income was the only skeleton in his closet. Late one night, alone with David, he burst out:

"I despise my work. Once I dominated it: now it dominates me. I'd like to tackle something big, but I haven't the pluck. I tried a dash upward some years ago, and, O Lord! what a cropper I came! But in my little soul, David, I knew that the best I had ever done was in that much-abused picture. It had stuff in it: imagination, faith, courage."

David listened, thinking of "Solomon's Garden," long ago buried beneath musical-comedy scores. He knew that he was conspicuous as a shining example of a man of talent who gave to his public exactly what it wanted in allopathic doses. Then he said:

"I wrote an oratorio once."

"You?" Harrington roared with laughter.

"Yes. It was like your picture. It had 'stuff' in it. I may produce it yet."

Harrington stopped laughing. He liked David, and his hand pressed his friend's arm as he whispered confidentially: "My dear fellow — don't! That picture of mine cut my income in half for two years. And the Missus reminded me I'd just sent Tommy to

Eton; and little Effie was coming out. I couldn't get away from that, my boy — eh?"

Very few Buskinites did get away from "that," except upon the wings of postprandial fancy.

Soon after Mollie left him, David travelled down to Sherborne. His visits to Fermor had become less frequent as the years passed. Fermor was now an old man; and he had always looked at life with tired eyes. Often his serenity exasperated David. The difference between them was hardly to be bridged except by gratitude, and, as Fermor smilingly refused substantial gifts, gratitude could only be expressed in words. Fermor had said once:

"Give me as much of your company as you can, David. I ask for nothing else."

"If you would live with me, father?"

"In London? My dear boy, that is impossible."

Upon arrival, David told Fermor that he had cut loose from Taffy Williams and the Jollity directorate.

"And what are you going to do?"

"I don't know. I've rushed down here to ask for advice. I want to talk to you and the Professor. I'm tempted to produce "Solomon's Garden."

"Oh!"

"Of course Lorimer calls me Humpty-Dumpty. I funk a fall. What do you feel about it, father?"

"David, you know what I feel about it."

"It's still unfinished. I hate to tell the truth even

to you, but after Mary's death I couldn't finish it. I haven't looked at the score since."

"You think you could finish it now?"

"I think so. I wonder what the Professor would advise."

"Consult him."

"The dear old man and I haven't much in common."

"Is that his fault?" asked Fermor.

David did not answer. Between himself and the Professor affection bloomed bravely, although it lacked the tender leaves of sympathy and confidence. David held his father-in-law to be "unsound"—the adjective which long ago had provoked protest from Mary—because Pignerol refused to reckon as complete a life other than that of domestic affection and peace. Like Fermor, he had refused to accept anything from a rich son-in-law except his company. David had begged to be allowed to pay for the keep of a carriage.

"A carriage? A horse? To carry me from a home where I am perfectly happy?"

"To carry you to a home where you are perfectly happy."

"My brave David, you are a good fellow, but it's my object to banish care from my life. Our brother, the horse, is a beast of burdens, but he imposes burdens—*quoi?*"

After tea, David walked up the hill. He found Pignerol in his garden busily engaged in bedding out certain plants which formed an old-fashioned star at one end of the lawn. Year after year, this bed was

reproduced with fidelity, because originally it had been set out by Madame Pignerol. In the centre was a cypher, an 'L' and an 'M' intertwined: the initials of the Christian names of husband and wife. The Professor allowed none to interfere with this labour of love and sentiment. He and his believed that Madame Pignerol assisted also in spirit.

"How is the book getting on?" said David, after the first greetings.

"It is not yet finished. *Saperlipopette!* What would you? Two thousand years have failed to reconcile Science with Religion. Do you expect me to do it in ten days?"

"But you have been twenty years at it."

"I may be twenty more. I see you staring at these ropes. The big elm is under sentence of decapitation."

"What?"

"It serves him right. He is all for outward show, that fellow. How he spreads himself, the peacock! But his roots are contemptible. I have no respect for the elm. He stands for what I despise. We chop off his swollen head to-morrow."

"You look wonderfully well," said David.

"I am well; there is nothing wonderful about that. It would be wonderful if I were ill. But you are pale and thin."

"I am worried."

"I should think so, up to your neck in London clay. Heaven be thanked, I have found my right soil and so will you. It's a thousand pities, *mon enfant*,

that you are so — so unscientific. You might learn much from what you despise as little. Has it ever struck you that vagabond seeds blown hither and thither by the wind infallibly find the soil most likely to nourish them? You are not as clever as a seed!"

David made no reply.

"Perhaps you are a gilded marigold, a marsh marigold. He flourishes in slimy, poisonous soil."

"I'm a fool," said David vehemently. "I can't make up my mind, and I want you and father to make it up for me."

Pignerol made a grimace. And, as David talked, he grimaced again, shaking his head and shrugging his shoulders. Ultimately, he presented the spectacle of a stout, red-faced, white-haired philosopher astride a fence. When David finished he growled out:

"*Mon fils*, it is not easy to stand in your shoes, and evidently you cannot abide my slippers. I am glad to hear you have parted from the worthy Taffy, but he has left his mark on you. He hung the tinkle-tinkle bell around your neck."

David exploded for the second time.

"Damn the tinkle-tinkle bell, and all the other bells!"

"Don't get excited! You lose force with your 'damns!' It's an act of criminal extravagance to squander force. Let us talk reasonably. Why do you wish to produce your oratorio?"

"Heavens! To justify myself. To prove that I am what I was intended to be."

"Can you write another 'Solomon's Garden'?"

"Another? Time enough to discuss that when the first has been accepted."

"Accepted? By whom?"

"By the public, of course."

"And if the public does not accept it?"

"That is what is bothering me."

"Our good Fermor says it is magnificent. I am not a musician. I don't know."

David hesitated. About his best work he was still modest.

"It's all right, I believe. One never knows."

"One always knows. Everything that I have done which is good, I know. Often I have been doubtful about what is indifferent or even bad. But the good — Bah! that jumps to the eye from the bottom of the wise soul!"

"I meant that one never knows whether others will recognize it as good."

"That is what you are after, *hein*, recognition. But you have had it already, pressed down and running over."

"Stopping over."

"My son, you puzzle me."

Beneath his kind, quizzical eyes, David blushed, beginning to have a belated vision of himself as the philosopher saw him, knowing also that evasion would be futile and foolish. He answered rather defiantly:

"I want an enduring success."

“And if it is denied, would you accept failure philosophically?”

David shrugged his shoulders. Pignerol laughed and took his hand, patting it paternally.

“I cannot advise you, *mon fils*.”

After leaving Green Hill, David paid a visit to the cottage in Westbury. Long ago he had sold the lease of it, and, since his wife's death, had not been near it, because it held tormenting memories of a great happiness which might have been even greater had he but realized how soon it was coming to an end. For a similar reason he could not bring himself to speak of Mary to Mollie. And he was glad that Mary's body lay in a remote grave, inaccessible to a busy man. Of the sentiment which attracts the quick to what is left of the dead he had no understanding. He dared not think of what her coffin held, except to regret that the dear flesh had not been cremated, and the ashes flung to the sweet, cleansing winds.

He paused at the gate where Mary had stood a thousand times awaiting his return with a welcoming smile. They had painted it together in the hope of saving a few pennies; and Mary had insisted upon the best paint. It would have been cheaper in the end to have employed a mechanic, for Mary had spoiled a gown, and he had upset his pot of paint.

Above the gate was a sign: “To let.”

David pushed open the gate, glanced at the front garden, which, being exposed to the public view,

was kept in tolerable order, and then, skirting the cottage, entered the small plot behind the house. Alas! a wilderness of weeds brought tears to his heart and eyes. Not a sign of narcissus or hyacinth or tulip could be seen. David had paid for the bulbs by doing without tobacco for six months; and after this tremendous act of self-denial the hyacinths had not come up. Rats consumed them! Mary laughed because she was so afraid of crying, tears being bad for tender plants. The purchase of an expensive rat-trap brought about the capture of one rat, who looked so sleek and guileless that Mary allowed it to escape. Such trifles turn memory into a playground or a torture-chamber. David wandered round the plot. Of the beloved roses only briars remained. David could remember the names of the roses, and the exact spot where each had bloomed. The ditch was once more filled with docks and nettles, although here and there a forget-me-not still struggled for existence. The gnarled, twisted, weather-beaten apple trees remained: the bare bones that Mary had arrayed so gloriously.

David flung himself down in the grass.

Lying there, he heard Big Tom strike the hour. The vast bell had been recast twice, but its note remained sweet after its purification by fire. He had listened to that bell for more than twenty happy years.

He tried to analyze this period of happiness, to place his finger upon this or that determining cause. At the club, speaking of his boyhood to men who had hunted and shot and travelled, the remark had been

frequent: "I say, Archdale, you must have had a devilish dull time of it. Eh — what?" But he had not been dull. The simplest pleasures had sufficed him.

Why?

The boy might have answered the question: the man groped as one partially blind stretches out tentative fingers, knowing that what he seeks is within reach but hidden from him.

Could such simple happiness be resurrected?

He recalled some lines of Longfellow which, long ago, Mary had repeated to him:

"Not in the clamour of the crowded street,
Not in the shouts and plaudits of the throng,
But in ourselves, are triumph and defeat."

He told himself that he might have been happy if Mary had come back with the assurance, however faint, of a life beyond. Pignerol was happy in his fool's paradise, because he believed firmly that his wife remained near him. He planted out that absurd star — which disfigured the lawn — because he was certain that it pleased Madame Pignerol! Wasn't this fancy running riot, barking at common sense and common experience?

Presently, he picked a few forget-me-nots, and went his way, with one glance backward at the windows of the cottage now shuttered and barred: dead eyes in a dead house. Upon it, and the garden, and his own heart, was inscribed the saddest of all words: — Ichabod.

After dinner, alone with Fermor, he mentioned for the first time that Mollie was under Mrs. Stormont's wing. Till this moment no one had or could have suspected the poignancy of his feelings, which he had hidden beneath an assumed gaiety. At the club, David said, "My little girl is going to be polished up by Mrs. Stormont," and Tom, Dick, and Harry replied, "The best woman in London to do it."

"Mollie has left you," said Fermor; "for how long?"

"I suppose for a year. Mrs. Stormont will present her and take her about."

"That worldly old woman!"

"It's most awfully good of her."

"Is it going to be awfully good for little Mollie?"

An awkward silence followed.

"Did she want to go?" asked Fermor.

"Yes."

"Did you want her to go?"

"I wanted her to go, if she wanted to go."

"David, surely you can be candid with me. This news distresses me as much as it astounds. Mary's daughter with Mrs. Stormont! Mary's daughter in training for a fashionable marriage! Mary's daughter taken away from her own father, and hawked about Mayfair."

Fermor let himself go so seldom that his words, when he did speak with authority, became impressive. Instantly, they fired David. He jumped from his chair, pale and excited, trembling with suppressed passion.

"I didn't want her to go. I could have sworn that she would have refused to go. I boasted of it to Mrs. Stormont. I dared her to tempt the child. Heavens! She needed no tempting. She jumped at the chance. Father, it nearly broke my heart, but I have some pride. I let her go — without a word. If she hankers after what Mrs. Stormont can give her, let her have it."

"No," said Fermor sternly.

"Perhaps you are right. Think what you like of me, call me a fool, a sentimental idiot, but believe that I loved that child, and — curse it — she flies off at the first whistle. And mind you, that clever old woman bombarded me with shattering truths. She accused me of filling my house with the wrong people, with bounders and Bohemians. But I swear I meant to clear 'em out."

"Why did you let them in?"

"Ah! Why?"

David walked to the fireplace. Fermor, gazing at him with softening eyes, saw once more the impulsive, generous boy whom he had loved so tenderly, and who had left him when the world whistled. And now, David in his turn was pierced by the same barbed shaft.

"My poor boy, I know exactly how you feel."

David turned. His perceptions, as a child, had been extraordinarily acute, although Mary's death seemed to have dulled them.

"Father, were you very sore when I left you?"

"Not when you went to Mary; I wished that above

all things. But when you ceased to give me your confidence, when you went away in that sense — I was — very — sore.”

He spoke reluctantly, as if the truth were dragged from him, but, so speaking, he smiled with a kindly but ironic sense of a situation more eloquent than any words. For he saw that the scales had not yet fallen from David's eyes, although his vision was less blurred.

“Let us talk it out,” said David.

The phrase evoked pleasant memories. In the good old days, man and boy had talked out most things. By the fender stood the armchair in which Fermor sat and smoked. In a corner was David's stool long unused. David fetched it, placed it near the armchair, and laughed.

“Let us talk it out,” he repeated.

“Is there anything more to say?” Fermor inquired.

“Everything I've bottled up for nearly ten years.”

Again the boy was speaking, using a boy's words in the deep tones of a man. Familiar gestures, delicate inflections, the poise of the fine head, served to remind Fermor that the youth in David was still alive and less changed than he had feared.

“I am dazed,” said David. “I have lost my bearings. Listening to the opinions and judgments of other men, my own seem to have vanished. The Professor made me squirm this afternoon, as he used to do when he caught me assuming knowledge of a subject upon which I was really ignorant. He looked at me as if

he knew that I did not know myself. Of course, if he's right, or half right, in his amazing ideas, why, then I'm all wrong. Mary once said that people travelled to the truth along different roads. She said, I remember, that you and the dear old Vicar and the Professor were approaching a common centre from opposite points."

"We were seeking a common centre," said Fermor.

From his higher chair he looked down upon David. The face was still young and handsome, but on it was printed the story of the past ten years. Time takes what is in a man's heart and writes it, indelibly, upon his countenance.

"I don't quite know what I've been seeking, but I do know what I've found: disappointment, bitterness, boredom. By Jove, I'm like the Professor's elm. Everybody thinks me a splendid tree, but my roots are contemptible. Perhaps in a different soil — Or if I chopped off my own swollen head ——"

Fermor filled his pipe, waiting and wondering. Presently David continued:

"If I had chosen different friends — Well," he laughed drearily, "there was a reason of sorts behind the invitations to bounders. Savages drive away devils by beating tin cans. Perhaps I thought that noise, a rowdy crowd, would drive out my blue devils. And they were kindly, easy folks to get along with but now ——"

"Yes?"

"I should like to be alone with you for a bit. Let's

go abroad in my car. Fresh air, change of scene, and your companionship will clear my wits. What do you say?"

"I should like it of all things."

"Really?"

"The invitation is as welcome as the dews of late summer."

"Just you and I. And we'll put the clock back. I'll pretend that I'm a kid again, and you shall spank the nonsense out of me. When can you start?"

"As soon as you are ready."

They talked together for a couple of hours, with a map of France spread upon a table between them. Fermor, an enthusiast upon the subject of Gothic architecture, had never seen, except in his dreams, the twin spires of Chartres Cathedral. And there were ancient organs to be examined, and possibly ancient scores mouldering away in worm-eaten chests. Fermor's eyes sparkled when he spoke of these; his voice became stronger.

"How keen you are!" said David. "Why did you not propose this trip before?"

"I was waiting for you," replied Fermor, simply. His quiet tones held an attenuated note of triumph, as if, all along, he had known that David would come back. Before he went to bed, he unlocked a desk, and drew from it a sheet of paper upon which he had scribbled a sonnet. Not for the world would he have shown his verses to David or Pignerol or any of his friends. He read them now with a pleasant smile

upon his face, with an expression of satisfaction, such as might be seen upon the face of a minor prophet whose tentative predictions have been verified by kindly Time. The sonnet had no merit, save that of setting forth an affection and faith which had never failed. As such, it is printed here:

TO DAVID ARCHDALE:

To me thou art a child of tricky Spring
Of April, rogue of months, now dark, now fair,
Whose sunbeams, dancing in the illusive air,
Flash promise of the gold Time may not bring.
And so, dear vagabond, spread wide thy wing
While April smiles. Glad youth must leave dull care.
Seek honey-scented meadows. Frolic there!
Be innocently happy. Taste thy fling.
When Spring sends tears instead of laughter, when
Dark cloud, or rain, or snow, or hail impend,
When fine, fair-weather folk abandon thee,
Forlorn and sad, David, remember then
One who remains, though days are drear, a friend,
Constant while life shall last. Fly home to me!

Fermor tore the sheet of paper into small bits, and flung them into his basket. His smooth brow was slightly puckered as he murmured to himself:

“Has David come back?”

CHAPTER XII

IN THE MONTH OF MAY

DAVID and Fermor went abroad in the lusty month of May, when "all herbs and trees renew a man." The migrant birds had invaded England, and every copse was a-flutter with nest-builders and a-thrill with melody. Upon the eve of departure David dined at Stormont Lodge. He had a few words alone with his hostess, but he said nothing — out of consideration for her feelings — which might lead her to believe that Mollie would be called home upon his return from France. To his dismay, Mrs. Stormont spoke confidently of an early marriage.

"Henry Middleton is paying her attention."

"That dull fellow!"

Middleton was a famous publicist and administrator.

"He's one of the best, and rich beyond the dreams of avarice. And there are others. The young lady can pick and choose. You can take my word for it that she has cleared her pretty eyes of any possible confusion between bounders and non-bounders. I predict triumphs. The little baggage is as ambitious as her father."

David replied rather violently:

"I want her to marry for love."

Mrs. Stormont smiled discreetly. She had not

married for love, but she reckoned herself none the worse for that. David glanced across the room to a sofa whereon Mollie was enthroned with three men in attendance.

"She can hold her own," said Mrs. Stormont.

David stared at Mary's child, seeing her for the first time with critical and jealous eyes. She sparkled; there was no doubt of it. He heard her silvery laughter, and wondered whether it rang true. For so young a girl she seemed amazingly at ease. She had assumed a freakish, not quite natural air.

"Is Middleton here?" he asked.

"David, how ignorant you are! He's making a remarkable speech in the House."

David rose to take his leave. He had hardly exchanged half a dozen phrases with Mollie, but as he crossed the room she sprang from the sofa and flitted up to him.

"Are you going? We must have a tiny talk in the hall." She slipped her hand upon his arm and laughed gaily. But, as soon as they were alone she said, poutingly, "How solemn you look!"

David wanted to ask the question upon his tongue's tip: "Have you missed me? Are you homesick?" Instead, rather stiffly, he muttered, "How do you like this?" and waved an all-embracing hand.

"I'm having a gorgeous time. Everybody is so kind. The Prime Minister was here yesterday, and he talked to me seriously as if I were a woman, which, of course, I am."

The sense that he had treated her as a child too long pierced him, but he pinched her cheek and said lightly, "Don't be in too great a hurry to escape from childhood." Then he added, "And don't be a moth!"

"A moth?"

"Glare and glitter seem to attract you."

She replied airily, "They do," but he perceived that she was puzzled, because hitherto he had offered everything except advice. She lifted her head and kissed him. He returned her kiss with ardour.

"I wish I was taking my Marionette with me."

"It would be great fun."

"It might be more than that."

"Daddy, I can't make you out to-night. Why are you running away from London when everything is just at its very best?"

"The nightingale is singing in the country."

"And Melba at Covent Garden."

"I prefer the nightingale."

Perhaps at that moment she divined that all was not well with him, for she squeezed his hand and her voice was very soft as she whispered: "Do you hate to leave me?"

"Isn't it going to be the other way about? Mrs. Stormont prepared me for a son-in-law."

Mollie's cheeks were a warmer pink as she replied hastily: "I believe you are jealous. I love you, Daddy; I only like other men."

With this assurance in his ears he went away.

Twenty-four hours later, Fermor and he crossed from Southampton to Havre. David appeared to be in high spirits and very anxious to exploit the excellencies of his new motor, a forty-power car of the best French manufacture. Freed from the restrictions of the English roads, he drove fast along the smooth wide highways. When Fermor suggested less speed, David replied that he was outstripping care. And for the first week it seemed as if he had succeeded. His pleasure in being once more alone with his oldest friend delighted Fermor. They lingered in Rouen and Caen, and then sped south to Chartres. Here they spent four days in and about the cathedral; and here, in the sacristy, Fermor discovered a Mass of Palestrina's, composed during the most brilliant period of the composer's life, which neither David nor he had ever heard. An old priest, more erudite than most of his fellows, rejoiced in the opportunity of discoursing upon a favourite theme to two English musicians. To him, Palestrina stood for an archetype of the supreme artist, working diligently for a pitiful wage, a prey to domestic afflictions, and yet serenely happy in his fidelity to the great gift entrusted to him. The old priest quoted his dying words concerning work conceived and accomplished "to the glory of the Most High God and for the worship of His holy temple." And then David was reminded of something which he had forgotten; Palestrina's series of *motetti* to words chosen from the "Song of Solomon." These had enjoyed a tremendous success, and had passed through in-

numerable editions. Fermor recalled the incident of Palestrina carrying this alabaster box of spikenard and breaking it at the feet of his master, Gregory XIII. The old priest concluded sorrowfully:

“He wrote the *motetti*, Messieurs, after the death of his wife, Lucrezia, whom he adored. Perhaps the love that he had for her was poured into them. Who knows?”

This incident made a profound impression upon David. He could talk to Fermor of nothing else. Finally he said in a constrained voice: “‘He wrote his ‘Solomon’s Garden’ after his wife’s death — If we were directed here ——”

“We may have been. As we were approaching Chartres, as those two spires rose out of the soft haze, I said to myself, ‘I have been here before.’”

“How and when, father?”

“Perhaps in a previous existence.”

“The professor has not infected you with that rubbish?”

Fermor winced at David’s contemptuous tone, but he said quietly: “I have an immense respect for Pignerol’s beliefs. And the doctrine of reincarnation appeals to me more as I grow older. There are arguments ——”

“What arguments, worthy of the name?”

“Infant prodigies. Take our own calling. We know the difficulties of composition, of selection, of execution. But many children leap to the point to

which I have crawled. Mozart, for instance, and you ——”

“I?”

“Most assuredly.”

“You think that I have lived before, that my music, which has come to me easily, is the outpouring of previous accumulations?”

“It is thinkable and even probable.”

“Shall I give Palestrina credit for ‘The Peer and the Peri’?”

“Ah, David, do not joke about that!”

“Odd that he should have chosen the Canticles. Well, father, this visit to Chartres has settled one thing. I mean to set about finishing my ‘Solomon’s Garden’ as soon as our holiday is over. And I shall dedicate it to you.”

“My dear David!”

“You have always been my Pope, my *papa beato*.”

“This makes me very happy.”

“Me too, if you are really pleased.”

“Gregory could not have been more pleased than I.”

A silence followed. Fermor was too moved for speech; David, having pledged himself, was sensible of a reaction: a rigour of doubt shook him. He tried to recall the *motif* of “Come, My Beloved,” but, to his exasperation, the sugary airs of his musical comedies buzzed in and out of his head, to the complete exclusion of strains more austere. He touched Fermor’s arm. They were walking together, after dinner, upon the Orléans road.

"Do you remember 'Come, my Beloved'?"

"I should think so: your finest bit of work."

"It's odd, but I can't recall a note of it."

"I could write down every bar."

After a pause David said, interrogatively: "The plaster which hid that wonderful work in the old Abbey Church kept it fresh and fine, didn't it?"

"Yes."

"If I dared to think that this plaster stuff of mine has in a sense preserved 'Solomon's Garden.'"

"Ah!"

"You are doubtful of that. All the same, I can bring to the finishing of the oratorio an experience of life which ought to have its value, eh?"

Fermor replied rather drily: "Perhaps. I hope so."

"At any rate, the plaster is to be stripped off. I swear, here and now, by the ashes of Palestrina, that I won't ring again the tinkle-tinkle bell."

"Thank God!"

"But I suppose I shall be condemned to go on hearing it for a time. It's tinkling now, confound it!"

"When we return to Sherborne you shall sit in the choir and stare at the roof, and I'll play to you some of Boyce's anthems."

"The old hunt for the 'heavenly note.'"

"'Come, My Beloved' has that."

"Has it?"

"I am sure of it."

"Madame Kirby-Lunn must sing it. There is a velvety smoothness about her voice which is enchanting.

Do you know that I'm beginning to feel keener than ever? A week ago I was only half alive."

He went on talking, discussing the merits of the great singers and instrumentalists, and saying that he would write a solo for a famous harpist. Fermor replied in monosyllables, wondering whether the dream of a lifetime would come true.

Presently, they turned, and in the moonlight they saw the vast cathedral, twice ravaged by fire, and yet to-day the finest example of French Gothic art at its zenith: an incomparable illustration of what love and faith may accomplish.

"David," said Fermor in a low voice.

"Yes?"

"Human hands will never again raise such a house as this, so nobly planned, so perfect in its proportion, so exquisitely wrought in all its details."

"It is unlikely."

"It is impossible. It represents something that is immortal, but something that has passed away from this earth."

"I suppose we can say the same of sculpture and perhaps painting."

"But not of music."

"You believe that?"

"The greatest music is yet to be written. I can imagine a heaven wherein music is the universal language, capable of expressing whatever there be of beauty and pleasure."

"I see you conducting a heavenly choir."

"You bring me back to earth. David, I once hoped that you would write the greatest music this world has ever heard."

"Published by Lorimer! Copyright secured in the United States?"

"You may do it yet."

"Um," said David. Then he added: "I told Mrs. Stormont that I had climbed to the top of the wrong tree."

CHAPTER XIII

DAVID SEES WITH DETACHMENT

THE weather was perfect when they took the road, early upon the following morning. Rain, however, had fallen during the night, more than necessary to lay the thick white dust, and the big car, travelling through a flat uninteresting bit of country at top speed, swerved more than once in turning sharp and slippery corners. David laughed.

"Sit tight," said he. "Nothing like pace to provoke an appetite."

They breakfasted at an old-fashioned inn, whose terrace overlooked the Loire.

"We have entered the garden of France," said David, "*le pays de rire et de rien faire*, Rabelais's country."

"No Gothic cathedrals here," said Fermor.

"Nothing really superb. The farther south we go the farther we get from the perfection of Rouen and Caen and Chartres, but you will like the *châteaux*."

Fermor shook his head doubtfully.

"David, I'm sure they'll be musical comedy to me."

"At any rate we are going to eat, drink, and be merry. Do you think we shall have the pluck to tackle snails? I say, what fun this is!"

"Yes, yes — quite enchanting."

"That's the word. The Professor, of course, would tell us that the spell still lingers. The Valois and the Bourbons turned this into a paradise. Their laughter echoes in our hearts."

"One cannot quite forget the Balafré, and Cardinal Balne's cage and the massacre in the courtyard at Amboise."

"Father, we have come abroad to put unpleasant thoughts from us. We won't go near Amboise, and we'll keep out of dungeons. After breakfast, we'll find a meadow full of hay, and go fatly to sleep on a haycock. *Garçon!* Another pint of this excellent wine."

They sipped their coffee and smoked cigars, while the great river flowed silently by. The landscape was suffused with golden sunlight, and even the tremulous leaves of the willows hung motionless in the lulled air, as if they were drowsily awaiting the kiss of summer. Upon the river one could see where the current swirled, and its surface, although placid, was actively resolving the prismatic beams, and reflecting with indescribable delicacy the infinite graduations of the azure sky. The myriad ripples caused by a passing barge held, each, for a dazzling instant, the image of the sun, and then vanishing slowly were absorbed into the quivering blue. "I could finish the oratorio here," said David. "Why shouldn't you and Mollie and I spend the summer near Blois?"

Without waiting for Fermor's answer he continued swiftly.

"Is it possible for a man to begin life again when he is my age?"

At the end of the terrace, not a dozen yards distant, an ancient thorn, gnarled, weather-beaten, warped to one side, had burst into full blossom. Its whiteness and its fragrance had challenged the attention of the two men, as they sat down to breakfast. Fermor raised his hand and pointed to it.

"That old May-tree," he said, smiling, "answers your question far more eloquently than an old man can do."

"What a miracle it is!" David inhaled the perfume. "Father, somebody has said that peace is a 'lullaby word' for decay. Is that true?"

"Only in the sense of a peace selfishly deaf to everything which disturbs it."

"Jove! How I should like to begin again! Wouldn't you?"

"I should prefer to go on to a fuller existence elsewhere."

"This is good enough for me. I never felt better."

"You see, I am seventy."

"In a minute the talk will become morbid. Let us find our hayfield."

They strolled along the bank of the river, till they found what they sought. David flung himself down, and within a minute was fast asleep. Fermor sat by him, gazing at his face, now warm with colour and smoothed by pleasant dreams. Much of the delightful attractiveness of youth lingered upon it, and especially

the possibilities of youth ever interesting to kindly age whose work is done.

"Can he begin again?" thought Fermor.

Then, almost unconsciously, he prayed that it might be so.

An hour afterward they were on their way to Blois. David had just said, "How well she's pulling," when suddenly a tire burst with a loud explosion and David could remember nothing more except an appalling vision of a granite wall racing at them!

BOOK II

*“God is law, say the wise; O Soul, and let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.
Law is God, say some: no God at all, says the fool;
For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in
a pool;
And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man
cannot see;
But if we could see and hear, this Vision — were it
not He?”*

TENNYSON.

*“Amid the mysteries that become the more mysterious
the more they are thought about, there will remain the
one absolute certainty, that we are ever in the presence
of an infinite and eternal energy, from which all things
proceed.”*

HERBERT SPENCER.

CHAPTER XIV

ON THE OTHER SIDE

BY WHAT miracle of God's mercy had he escaped injury?

This was the first question that David asked himself after the accident. For the impact must have been tremendous. The motor was running at fifty miles an hour over one of the finest roads in France. And yet, after the smash, David discovered himself standing upon the highway, gazing down upon a mass of splintered wood and iron, all that was left of his magnificent car. He was sensible of no bodily injury, although his vision seemed to be blurred, as if the optic nerve had sustained a shock. The landscape, for instance, appeared to have lost substance. It remained clear, too clear, like a reflection in water. This luminosity registered itself with precision.

What succeeded effaced it for the time being. David remembered that Fermor had been driving with him, and, as suddenly, he saw huddled up against the wall what seemed to be a mere bundle of clothes. David became overwhelmingly conscious of his own vitality, as he realized that his life had been spared, while Fermor's had been taken. Horrorstruck, he hastened to Fermor's side, knelt down, called him by

name, knowing that there would be, could be, no answer.

Fermor was dead. Death must have been instantaneous; for the head was terrifically crushed, the body altogether limp, as if every bone in it had been shattered.

David sank to the ground, sick and dizzy with horror. His father was beyond human help, annihilated. And he, David, remained uninjured, unbruised, sensible only of shock, and that curious luminosity of vision, so keen, so penetrating that he was able to peer beneath a crushed bundle of clothes, and behold a dear body abominably mangled.

The intense thought came: Why had he been spared?

The answer came as quickly.

His work on earth was not yet accomplished. It had been ordained that he should finish "Solomon's Garden." For the past month this hope had been rekindled in his soul. Now, flame-like, it became a blazing, soaring conviction. The future presented itself as a vast snow-clad mountain, a peak such as the Matterhorn, up which he must climb and climb, regardless of risk to limb or life, till he stood at last triumphant upon the glorious summit.

He never knew, afterward, how long he remained thus, half kneeling by Fermor, in an ecstasy of emotion and sensibility.

It occurred to him — as one of a myriad impressions so vivid and yet so ephemeral that most of them evaded analysis — that he might be in a sort of trance in which

action, temporarily, was paralyzed and feeling indescribably heightened. An interruption, the advent of strangers, however pitiful, would have hurt intolerably. He was alone with his living thoughts which winged their way swifter than swallows, swooping from past to future, ascending and descending, imbued with a restless activity which fascinated even while it bewildered. They refused to linger, even for an instant, upon the present, upon the unspeakable catastrophe which had just taken place.

The fitter of two men had survived!

With this deduction, fortifying it immeasurably, came the memory of what had passed between Fermor and himself upon that same day. Fermor had admitted that he wished to "go on." David, on the other hand, had experienced a convulsing desire to "begin again." And if — as Mary had maintained so often — desire in any form, good or evil, was indeed prayer, why then who could doubt that his passionate supplication had been heard and granted.

The world, in Maytime, was so young.

He could hear a lark singing overhead, and its song was a psalm of life, a vital message, something translatable. When the flute-like notes melted away, other sounds captivated David's ears, rising and falling in cadence with his thoughts. The grass by the roadside, the leaves upon the trees, the flowers of the field, seemed to echo and reëcho the bird's song. The orchestration of it held David enchanted. He told himself not only that he lived, but that life had become

harmonious and intelligible and in an amazing sense simple.

The reason of this presented itself.

His vision had been cleared. For the first time in his life he saw from within and without.

He rose to his feet.

The road stretched straight in front of him, but a few yards away there was a curious shadow, a black blot upon the white surface. David stared at it, glancing from right to left. The sun shone in a stainless sky. Between it and the shadow there was nothing.

David remained, for a moment, thrilling with an uncanny apprehension. Then he advanced a step or two and paused again — horror-struck; for the shadow transposed itself into substance.

It was a man lying face down upon the road.

At once he leapt to the conclusion that the car, when it skidded, must have struck some unfortunate foot-passenger standing or sitting beside the granite wall. But, as he approached the body something familiar about its proportions struck an icy chill to his heart.

In a flash he apprehended the mystery.

He, David Archdale, had not escaped. Or, rather his escape was stupendously other than what he had deemed it to be.

Gazing at his own shattered flesh, David realized a sense of detachment, unachievable. For instance, he understood why the landscape had become unsubstantial, like one of Rowlandson's prints in colour.

And with this conviction of the unreality of things which he had reckoned most real—such as stone walls—came not a perception but rather a discernment (for a new sense seemed to have sprung into being) of a force holding him to earth, in defiance of a power essentially different which allured him upward. He asked himself: Was he, a spirit, still subject to the laws of gravitation? The question was answered later. David passed swiftly from its consideration, for the knowledge that he was a spirit expelled other speculations and permeated his being with a vivid and vital pleasure. We know that in his earth-life he had not been sure of existence after death. He had envied, inordinately, those whose faith had been stronger than his own. And always, he had felt gropingly that life must be immortal and probably Protean, and that the soul, would remain an individuality.

Now he knew.

With this knowledge was included other realizations, such as the irrelevance of Time and Space, now no more to be measured with watch and rule than the cardinal virtues. He divined that he was free to leave the spot whereon he stood, or to remain. For the moment he chose to remain.

But soon a terrible loneliness began to oppress him. What had become of Fermor? Why was his spirit invisible? Taking for granted that Fermor, like himself was conscious of a superlative vitality, of a renascence absolutely sublime, it seemed exasperating that they could not at least exchange congratulations.

He called Fermor by name — and looked up.

Till this moment his attention had been concentrated upon the shattered car, the two bodies lying upon the road, and the familiar yet strangely unfamiliar landscape.

As soon as he looked up, he became more conscious of the power holding him to earth. And, whereas he could see with penetrating clarity everything upon the earth-plane, his vision in regard to the planes above was blurred. He gazed into obscuring mists. Nevertheless, gazing upward and yearning with all his strength to pierce the veil, he became aware of a spiritual quickening, and an odd sublimation of the senses, which seemed to be merged into one sense. Although it will be necessary to speak hereafter of David using the senses familiar to us, he himself apprehended that speech, as mortals conceive it, had ceased. Communication, in fine, became telepathic. And he discovered later that hearing, feeling, taste and smell were exercised by virtue of the will. It was the will, not his vocal chords, which summoned Fermor.

In a passion of importunity, he besought his father to come to him.

“I am here.” David knew that Fermor was close.

Presently he heard Fermor’s voice, curiously clear and sweet; but to his profound distress he could not see him.

“I am here,” said Fermor.

“But I do not see you. Can you see me?”

“Yes.”

"Is Mary with you?"

"Dear David, she would come if it were possible."

"You have seen her?" His voice thrilled with jealous agony.

"I have. Mary cannot come to you, but you may go to her."

"When and how?"

"In the fulness of time. She told me to remind you of what you had written upon the inside of her wedding-ring."

"I wrote 'For ever and ever.' Does she mean that she is mine eternally?"

"Or that you are hers."

"I understand." He added bitterly: "The greater does not repudiate the less?"

"Never."

"Isn't it amazing that we should be here at all."

"It would be amazing if we weren't. David, my dear son, I must leave you. It is the Law, the same law which tears apart human creatures on earth."

"Father, you forsake me?"

The calm, grave voice seemed to be that of a pitying judge, as it replied: "What held you to earth still holds you, and must hold you."

"Don't go yet!"

- There was no answer

Later, two peasants approached, heralded by the tinkling bells upon the horses which drew a farm cart. David watched their stolid faces quicken from indiffer-

ence into interest, from interest to excitement, from excitement to terror. They were clowns of the field, such as Millet painted, but in the presence of death they behaved with dignity and distinction. David's pocket-book, full of banknotes, had fallen from his coat. One of the men replaced it without opening it. The bodies were lifted tenderly into the cart, and covered with a cloth.

David followed.

Passing a Calvary, on their way to Blois, the men removed their hats, and kneeling upon the rough stone steps prayed for the repose of the souls of the dead. David could read their simple hearts more easily than he could read his own. He saw clearly their strength and their weakness, and could balance the good and evil in each. He was astonished to discover in these rough fellows, whom, but a short time since, he would have regarded as little higher in intelligence than the big horses they drove, minds free from care as those of children, and a simple faith which redeemed the too gross flesh. The man who had replaced the pocket-book lingered longer upon his knees. He was thanking his patron saint inasmuch as he had resisted the overwhelming temptation to examine the pocketbook and take from it a small sum sufficient to defray some very pressing need.

"This is a better fellow than I," thought David.

The peasants had decided to take the bodies to the hospital at Blois, where the authorities would compensate them for their time and trouble. Obviously,

David's magnificent body impressed them. They discussed him stolidly, as if he were a vast joint awaiting hungry imaginations. One of the two said, with humour:

"He has had plenty of fine weather, this one."

And David asked himself if it were true. His own world would repeat with variations the peasant's remark; at the Buskin, after luncheon, when members gathered together, it would be said that Archdale had been highly favoured. Harrington, the painter, would exclaim in his genial voice: "Yes, yes, a fine innings," and old Wrest, belonging to the generation that encouraged puns, would twist his grizzled moustache, and add: "He made some remarkable scores!" There would be long obituary notices in the papers concerning the most popular composer of the day, and perhaps one paragraph in the *Dorchester Chronicle* about Fermor.

And yet, Fermor had soared upward leaving him fettered to earth.

Able to move horizontally wherever he pleased, David chose to return to England. As he travelled, he met and passed many spirit forms who seemed to regard him with indifference. They were alike not only in form, but in mentality. Without speech, David became aware that they thought and suffered as he did. He noticed also other spirit forms, so shadowy as at first to be imperceptible. There were myriads of these hovering about all human habitations. And they passed in and out of living bodies. David perceived that they were thought-forms; and they

took shape as he studied them, some being sweet and fair and others grotesquely monstrous. He saw also that certain persons, and in particular very young children, appeared to be automatically receptive of the most beautiful of these thought-forms, and that other men and women were as automatically receptive of the monstrous and unclean. The comedy and tragedy of terrestrial life spread itself before his gaze, leaving nothing to the imagination and arousing in David's mind a tremendous sensibility to the unmistakable difference between good and evil. With the laying aside of the flesh, there had come a crystalline perception of what artists call "values." For the first time he saw things and people not in perspective, but in isometrical projection.

Presently a spirit, taller and more imposing than the others, addressed him by name.

"You know me?" David demanded.

"I was present at the first performance of 'The Peer and the Peri.' Also you attended my funeral."

"Yes," said David.

He recognised a famous soldier to whom a grateful country had paid high honour.

"You have only just crossed over."

"How do you know that?" David asked.

The tall spirit smiled with an expression derisive and inexpressibly sad.

"Forgive me, but there is an unmistakable odour of earth about new-comers. You will soon lose it.

Are you thinking of attending your own funeral? I say — don't."

"Why?"

"You will hear what your friends say about you."

"Handsome things were said of you."

"Fulsome! And now, when one sees clearly, when one knows ——"

"What do we here?"

"Whatever we like."

"Within limits?"

"Without limits. That is the tragedy of it."

"What do you mean?"

"You will soon find out."

As he spoke, his smile seemed to David the most dreary and tragic he had ever beheld. The soldier continued in the same impassive, indifferent tone:

"There are no restrictions and oblivions. If it pleases you to write more musical comedies ——"

"Never again!" said David grimly.

"Or to listen to your own compositions. Your best work ought to interest you, Archdale."

"It would, if I had produced it." He thought of "Solomon's Garden."

"So would mine, if I had done it. We meet our lost opportunities and they gibber at us."

"Is there no way out?"

"I have found none — and yet.

"Yes?"

"There are moments when the earth power seems to slacken—we are drawn up and then pulled back again."

As he spoke he vanished. David heard the attenuated echo of a mocking laugh, which aroused in him an uncanny curiosity and an unutterable mournfulness.

Not long afterward he was confronted by another shadow, the wraith of a woman he had known intimately. He remembered how much her death had affected him, because she loved life so intensely. To the last she had struggled against an incurable malady, entreating the doctors to save her, to extend the lease of pleasure and excitement. Up to a certain age high health had been hers, and an immeasurable capacity for enjoyment. David knew how loathsome disease had been to her; how she resented it in others; how she quailed when she was attacked by it.

"You?"

The clear voice, with its subtle and penetrating inflections, had not changed.

"Yes — I."

"But I reckoned you one of the finer spirits."

"Just clay"

"How odd to meet you here!"

David divined mystery. Very tentatively, remembering that the soldier had refused to answer the same question, he said:

"How do you pass the time?"

"There are distractions even for us. You will find out. Why haven't you found out?"

"I have just crossed over."

"Of course. Well ——" She hesitated. And immediately he became aware of a desire on her part to help him, perhaps to warn him. At the same moment a certain awe and distress assailed him, a premonition of danger and suffering.

"You were about to tell me something?"

Then she laughed, and her laugh was the same as the soldier's, as poignant and as uncanny.

"Do you remember my theory that on earth we got what we wanted if we wanted it badly enough?"

"Yes."

"I used to say that the earth was quite good enough for me. I died protesting against the power which tore me from it. That is why I am here now."

"You won't tell me what to do?"

"I would sooner that others told you. My sense of shame is not quite extinct."

"Others! What others?"

She laughed again, and he realised that in a moment she too would vanish. Accordingly he said hurriedly, "Don't leave me! Surely misery loves company."

"Not here. Not in the sense you mean. And" — her voice seemed to sink to a whisper — "if you knew what I do now, how I pass the time, you would wish to leave me. Farewell, my friend; pray that we may not meet again."

She floated from him, leaving him with a sense of desolation and horror so acute that he made no effort to detain her.

David approached London. The great city had enticed him as a flesh and blood entity, and—oddly enough—it allured him still. He was sensible of a quickening of pulses, of a vibration strange but not unpleasant. The roar of the traffic, the hurrying crowds, the colour and movement excited him. He longed to mix with the quick, to share once more their ambitions and desires. The longing became so overmastering that he entered his club, pausing as usual to ask for his letters, and surprised that the old hall-porter did not bustle out of his box to greet him.

He ascended the marble steps, and walked into the smoking-room.

Once more the familiar talk fell upon his ears, the everlasting gossip about men and women he knew, the futile and often fatuous criticism, the “log-rolling,” the anecdotes, and the inexhaustible speculation as to whether Tom or Dick would “get there.” And the “there” seemed a pin’s point upon the surface of the planet, and the “here,” where David found himself, the whole universe.

Old Wrest sat in his armchair, sipping his coffee, and alternately smoking and biting his cigar. David could hear his words and read his thoughts. And a careful inspection of the inside of Wrest’s mind was not unlike a leisurely walk through a well-swept and garnished public library. Wrest’s knowledge of literature was encyclopaedic, but he knew little of men and almost nothing concerning women. During a long life he had sought for and found the finest thoughts

of others; he had become an asylum for them. David could see their shadowy forms coming and going, although, for the most part, they seemed content to remain passively where they were, particularly the mid-Victorian ideas, who had survived their usefulness, and were entitled, so to speak, to lie quietly upon the shelf, permitting themselves to be taken out occasionally for an airing.

Not far from Wrest sat Thelluson, his illustrious rival. If it might be said that Wrest knew everything — and even Thelluson admitted that — Thelluson, with equal truth, might claim to know everybody. He had become a National Portrait Gallery. The methods of the two famous critics were not antithetical but different. Thelluson concerned himself with persons — actors, authors and dramatists — while Wrest, with an ironic contempt for flesh and blood, concentrated his mind upon ideas, especially those which had escaped the notice of the author whose work he happened to be reviewing.

David was surprised to find that Thelluson was a much better fellow, kinder, sweeter at core, more generous, than he had deemed him. To both men, the creative gift had been denied, to both life had been a struggle, and each had “arrived” after indefatigable work, the patient, self-denying effort of laborious nights and days. This, then (so David clearly perceived), had been the secret of their influence and power in the particular world they dominated and instructed. A fine humanity informed

Thelluson, an ultra-refined intellectuality permeated Wrest.

It was well with these veterans, who had mixed so freely with their fellows. They had been in the world always, supremely interested in that world's facts and fancies, but each, after his own fashion, striving to raise the standard of his generation, and sensible that his work, however ephemeral in its outward expression, had not been altogether in vain.

Far otherwise was the case of a man moodily listening to Wrest's remarks about a play freshly imported from America. Henry Newsom was the son of that once omnipotent iconoclast, whose works will never more be read. Henry the Second, as he had been called at Oxford, was a writer of fiction, his father having disposed very uncomfortably of most facts, including a belief in life after death. The late Master of Balliol, and many minor prophets, had prophesied glory and honour for the iconoclast's son. He had come to London covered with the *pulverem Olympicum* of Schools. But a "double-first" at Oxford may find himself a person of no importance in Paternoster Row. Wrest contended that Newsom, now a man of thirty-five, had never "found himself." That accounted for everything. He had discovered a fictitious Newsom, a composite photograph of a dozen great men, to whom, each in turn, he had played "the sedulous ape." His best work was the second-best of Hawthorne, Thackeray, Flaubert and Loti. Wrest's word, "a salad," had damned his first novel. His

latest book had been received with the usual comment, that once more the talented author had "just missed it."

David peered curiously into Newsom's mind, and shuddered. The poor fellow was possessed by demons of jealousy, who ravaged him unceasingly, tearing at his entrails! He came seldom to the Buskin, preferring a smaller club, where his roar was rarely challenged. He said that the sight of men like Harrington and Archdale made him sick, and stigmatized them as charlatans and self-advertisers. Metaphorically, he foamed at the mouth when indiscreet persons prattled of Mr. Hall Caine and Miss Corelli. If style was the man, what in Reason's name were they?

David had always believed that Newsom was sincere, and that his comparative failure as a writer was due to the fact that the man was superior, blessed (or cursed) with a mind too fine and too hypersensitized to be appreciated by the subscribers to Mudie's and Smith's. Now, he saw with horror a *poseur*, poisoned by envy, a helpless prey to the miserable, mean, Comus-rout crew of myriad unsatisfied aspirations, which tormented him as they have tormented millions since the world began. Newsom had a charming wife, delightful children, and an income sufficient for his needs, but these blessings were as snowflakes beneath the blazing, red-hot conviction that he would never be acclaimed as other than his father's son.

Suddenly, the talk turned, and Archdale's own name was mentioned.

"Where is he?" said Thelluson.

"In France," Wrest replied.

David considered the ethical propriety of leaving the club, but curiosity restrained him. Also, he was humorously sensible that as an eavesdropper an evil he might overhear concerning himself would fall far short of the real truth, as he saw it with absolute clarity.

"Archdale is the best fellow I know," said Thelluson.

"What rot!" sneered Newsom.

"I know dozens of men whom he has helped."

"Nothing of the 'humble Allen' about him evidently."

"Has he ever helped you, Newsom?" asked Wrest.

"Of course not. Why?"

"I thought it possible, as you seemed to have a grudge against him."

"Against him — no; against what he stands for — yes. As for helping people, why shouldn't he? He's made pots of money out of an idiotic public, and in return he scatters a sort of largesse. Don't talk to me about Archdale!"

"I won't," said Thelluson, with a grin. "I'll talk to Wrest. You can stick your head under a cushion if you like."

Newsom stalked from the room.

"Poor devil!" said Thelluson. "He's not fit to black David's boots."

David in the flesh would have felt an agreeable titillation at this tribute from a dispenser of salt rather than

sugar, but David disembodied smiled sourly, for in Newsom's mind he had recognized many visitors to whom he had extended hospitality. Then he heard Wrest saying quietly:

"Is David a happy man?"

"Who can answer such questions?"

"You pretend to understand men, to read character, to pass judgment. I don't. I can tell you what I think of Archdale's work, but of the real man I know little."

"I repeat — he is one of the best."

"I take exception to a phrase so hackneyed and so general. What do you mean by the best?"

"You know well enough, *mon vieux*."

"Perhaps. But the 'best' is a big word. Archdale has been endowed with tremendous gifts. If I believed in reincarnation I should be willing to admit that he is 'one of the best,' that, in short, his amazing pre-eminence would indicate — how shall I put it? — evidence of an accumulation of talents and rewards."

Thelluson laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"You represent accumulation also."

"I do — I do. It's amazing. And if one knew a little more ——!"

They smoked on in silence, while David, who did know the little more, asked himself the question: "Is Wrest right? Have I lived before? And, if so, why am I not conscious of these former lives?"

The question became the more interesting, because in his present state he felt intolerably burdened with a

knowledge and experience too great to have been garnered during one lifetime. At last he confronted what he had reckoned to be mere instinct. But with this lifting of the veil, so wide a prospect and intropsect were revealed that he was at a loss to "take in" what he perceived.

At this moment Newsom rushed into the room, pale and breathless with excitement. His distress was so evident that both Wrest and Thelluson jumped up.

"What has happened?" said Wrest.

"Archdale — Archdale!"

"What of him?"

"Oh, it's awful — awful. And I was speaking against him. He's dead, smashed in a motor accident. The news has just come over the 'ticker.'"

He sat down, trembling violently, and covered his face with his hands.

"Archdale dead?" repeated old Wrest. "I can't believe it."

Thelluson, without speaking, left the room, but he returned immediately as pale and distressed as Newsom had been.

"It's only too horribly true," he stammered. "I say, Wrest, what about his daughter? They'll be shouting the news in the streets within half an hour."

"No, no," said Wrest. "The last edition of the evening papers is out. But I will 'phone Mrs. Stormont. Poor child! My God! what a catastrophe! She adored her father!"

"David adored her!" said Thelluson.

And David, since the accident had been so preoccupied with his own confounding experience that he had not even thought of his child.

Why had he forgotten one so dear to him? Was this the supreme proof of his selfishness?

Immediately he was seized with a passionate desire to go to her, to be at her side when the dreadful moment came, to sustain her, to inspire — if it were possible — some solace, the assurance that his love for her remained constant, or even greater than it had been. Surely he would be permitted to do that?

He saw by the clock that it was late, and that Mollie, probably, was in bed and asleep. They would let her sleep till the morrow. Mrs. Stormont could be trusted to see to that. Then, as he left the room, he heard Wrest saying:

“Archdale might have accomplished great things.”

His epitaph had been spoken.

CHAPTER XV

THE SOUL OF A CHILD

DAVID passed slowly through crowds composed of quick and dead. The thoroughfares swarmed with spirits darting hither and thither with bat-like movements. Outside the gin-palaces, the lowest forms fought for the possession of human bodies, seeking the gratification of appetites inordinate during the earth-life and still unsated long after death. David perceived that the spirit world, upon the plane nearest to earth, is subject to the vices and temptations of earth. The lust of the flesh, in fine, was the right name for that power which he had likened to the law of gravitation. And that lust could only be enjoyed through the flesh, when in possession of the flesh, which — so David perceived — must be willing to entertain the desires clamouring for admittance.

At this moment he began to apprehend the miracle of the human will. His eyes pierced beneath the surface of man and things with the penetration of the Röntgen ray. That curious clearness of what was animate and what he had hitherto regarded as inanimate was explained by the fact that he could resolve what he beheld into ultimate atoms. A marvellous light, burning more or less brightly, illu-

mined every object upon which his eye rested. By it all secrets were revealed.

Many, and these not outwardly the most strong, seemed to be immune against the attacks of the vicious thought-forms. David watched with interest a young girl, shabbily dressed, who was walking alone in the direction whither he was going. She was about the age of Mollie, but insignificant in feature and form, with a complexion pallid from lack of nourishing food, and a thin, undeveloped body wearied by overwork. Beside her flaunted a beautiful woman whom David recognized as an erstwhile chorister at the Jollity Theatre. In each the light burned, blazing with incomparable brilliance in the one, flickering tempestuously in the other. And by its white flame, lo! the poor work girl became transfigured into a dazzling creature; and the flickering spark seemed to change the beauty of the older woman into something loathly and monstrous.

David understood that of necessity each person must possess an aura, and that its quality and colour must, as inevitably, depend upon the quantity of light within and the power of that light to pierce the gross wrappings of the flesh.

While perceiving and recording these impressions, David thought with ever increasing pleasure of his own child, into whose white soul he was about to gaze.

It seemed incredible that he should have been so engrossed with himself and the analysis of his own emotions as to have forgotten this essential part of him, his very flesh that remained. The mere thought of

seeing her again, of seeing her, moreover, as she was, filled him with delight. The famous soldier he had met and his poor friend — why had they not mentioned this supreme interest, this tremendous link between parent and child? Each had married, each had children. And neither had spoken of them.

Leaving Piccadilly, David passed into the Park, upon whose wide, unpeopled expanses of soft turf the stars shone softly. He was in no hurry to reach Stormont Lodge. He wanted to think of his child, to behold her with the lucid detachment and sane judgment with which he had beheld poor Newsom, who, indeed, had moved him to profoundest pity.

Accordingly, he sat down by the Serpentine upon a bench often occupied by him during his earth-life. It had been his habit, when he first returned to London, after Mary's death, during that abominable period of sleeplessness, to rise early and walk in Hyde Park. Here, many of his most popular songs had been conceived. Doubtless their delightful lyrical quality came from the trees, the flowers, the ever-changing skies translucently reflected in the water. But David had never forgotten that "the people" surrounded this vast garden. And we may believe that the popular note, instantly recognized by them, proceeded from them. In David's musical comedies even an untrained ear could mark the rhythm and colour of life as it lived in an immense city. Dominating exquisite trills and cadences was the hum of the vast crowd, now muted to an attenuated whisper, now swelling to a thunderous roar.

Beneath the stars, the waters of the Serpentine shimmered with a delicate radiance, reflecting the worlds above, infinitely multiplied, each illuminated by the mystic light of the Divine Mind, each saturated with It and by It. And he perceived that what we call matter is only inorganic in the sense that it receives and transmits the light with difficulty and in varying quantities according to the stage of evolution which each object, whether stone, or tree, or animal has reached.

With this knowledge of the Divine Mind penetrating all forms from the lowest to the highest, forms in themselves of graduated consciousness and power, came also the knowledge of his own limitations. He knew so much more than he had ever believed it possible to know of the plane whereon he moved, that he became conscious of the infinitely fuller life upon the planes above. And his increasing realization of what was above and beyond aroused the conviction that once he had moved upon these upper planes and had brought from them memories which now lay like shadows upon an undeveloped photographic plate. If he had lived before, if he were destined to live again, this supreme consciousness of an immortal self would quicken upon these planes and nowhere else. Apprehending this, the power which attracted him upward seemed to grow in strength; the earth-dust weakened.

He told himself, passionately, that he was not as those other spirits whom he had met. Earthly desires and ambitions he was willing to surrender. He would see his child and ascend.

Mollie — as he had guessed — was asleep when he entered her room. He gazed at a sweet face, half hidden by masses of thick waving hair. Exercising a curious attribute of his disembodied powers of vision, he could perceive at will the outward and the inward, or either separately. Lacking the desire to see, he saw nothing.

Mollie's room presented a virginal appearance of blue and white. Mrs. Stormont was blessed with a nice sense of what was appropriate; and David perceived with complacency that his darling was enshrined in a perfect setting. He was reminded of a pearl, untouched by the hands of men, lying in a shell of mother-of-pearl. A delicate fragrance filled the air, the perfume of some white blossoms of spring. Upon the dressing table lay the ivory brushes, and many other pretty things which he had given to her. By the side of the looking glass was a large photograph of himself. Upon the other side was a portrait of Mary taken shortly after her marriage. Pignerol's genial smile and quizzical eyes, Fermor's grave, kindly countenance, greeted David familiarly. Each seemed to say: "We are here — on guard."

Between the girl's parted lips, one could just see the small, well-set teeth; her long eyelashes showed as a dark shadow beneath the heavy lids; upon her cheeks glowed the flush of healthy sleep.

Few fathers could have gazed unmoved at so fair a daughter. And into David's heart there rushed a wave of unutterable tenderness and love, so over-

whelming, so vast a surge, that it seemed to obliterate previous sensibilities. He told himself that this was his justification for having lived. His ambitions vanished. The music within him seemed to melt upon a silence, to float from him with a faint sigh of protest. He laughed, thinking of the absurd saw about Art being long and Life short. What was Art but the expression, the necessarily ephemeral expression, of immortal life? The best art endured throughout a few centuries, merely because it presented life faithfully.

Which was the greater — "Solomon's Garden," or Mollie?

He saw that she had been reading before she fell asleep. The book lay upon the counterpane, close to an outstretched arm; her delicate fingers, so like his own, almost touched a turned-down page at which he glanced, remembering with a pang Mrs. Stormont's indictment that he did not even know the name of his daughter's favourite hero.

Then he read the title of the book, asking himself, wonderingly, if it were possible that his little Mollie was poisoning her mind with such fungus fare as this.

The novel had enjoyed a vogue, because of its subtlety and daring. It dealt with incidents connected with the breaking of the seventh Commandment, and the evil in the book was the greater because, obviously, the sympathies of the writer included the sin with the sinners. David, singularly clean-minded, held too fast, perhaps, to the old-fashioned principle of cherishing innocence. The men and women who came to his

house understood this and respected it. The slightest word likely to offend the sensibilities of a child would have brought upon the speaker a crushing rebuke.

At once, from his knowledge of Mrs. Stormont, David knew that it was unthinkable to suppose her capable of placing this book in Mollie's hands. Mollie, therefore, was reading it "on the sly." The detestable phrase, festered in a mind dominated by an increasing dread of discovering something worse. He looked into the book, instead of into the heart of the child. Upon every page an appeal to the senses presented itself with diabolical suggestiveness. The writer seemed to be intoxicated with juices expressed from forbidden fruit; he frolicked along the primrose way apparently regardless of the fact that spring was not the only season in the year; he wallowed in sunshine and roses. To David, the author's moral obliquity of vision, his perversity of judgment in regard to what is pure and true, his morbid presentation of vice masquerading as virtue — these were revealed as monstrous and unmistakable. David saw fanged rocks beneath the opaline surface of a summer sea. Mollie, of course, was enchanted by the magic of sensuous words and glowing phrases, and blind to aught else. She had heard, probably, that the book was "wonderfully written," and at her age the wonderful appealed immensely.

Accordingly, we behold the fond father smiling at fear, fortified by the conviction that all things must

be pure to the pure. One glimpse into Mollie's mind would put to flight grisly phantoms.

And yet he hesitated.

The child's soul was holy ground. His own unworthiness oppressed him, while the yearning to enter became irresistible.

Suddenly the girl's physical body seemed to vanish, as if obscured by a mist. David, indeed, perceived a cloud, and remarked that it was dull and opaque. Immediately, his quickening intelligence, which seemed to answer questions almost before they were put, explained the nature of this surprising mist. Brief as had been his experience as a disembodied spirit, he had learned that Man upon the earth-plane possesses more than one body, and that each of these can express itself in colour, form and light. He realized that up to this moment, he had been gazing upon the physical body, and that Mollie's mental body had not forced itself upon his notice, partly because he had concentrated his attention upon the dear flesh, and, partly, because the mind may have been absent, wandering in idle vagabondage along dream-paths whither he might not be able to follow. Now, presumably, the mind-body had returned.

As the mist seemed to clear, although but partially, David saw that this was so. He beheld once more the physical body, slightly relaxed. A soft sigh fluttered from Mollie's lips. Her fingers moved. Her bosom rose and fell.

Then the father looked deep into his child's soul.

CHAPTER XVI

MARY'S VOICE

HE BEHELD a wilderness. The bubbling fountain of Youth seemed to be clogged by growths malignantly active. He was reminded of his visit to the garden which Mary had planted and watered with such solicitude, and which now, neglected and abandoned, had become a tangled thicket of nettles and weeds. And, as in the garden he had witnessed the struggle between fair and foul, the higher vegetation fighting desperately against the assault of the lower; so also in the child's soul he saw the same inexorable warfare. What he had transmitted, his own lower nature, was fighting with the higher attributes inherited from Mary. And his evil was overpowering her good. The weeds strangling the flowers had been planted in this virgin soul by him. He recognized them instantly; selfishness, vanity, pride, and a sensuousness likely, if unchecked, to ripen into sensuality, David had not been sensual in the grosser meaning of the word; for, in his case, the senses remained subordinate to the intellect. Love of light and form and colour, passion for sweet sounds and fragrant essences, these had served to minister to his art, and had found expression in the music which so endeared him to the multitude.

In fine, his art had preserved him from intemperance.

But Mollie was no devotee of art, although acutely sensitive to art in its Protean manifestations. Part of her charm flowed from a catholic appreciation of and sympathy with the various artists she was continually meeting; nevertheless, like her mother, she had no special aptitudes for the works she admired.

David understood why the famous soldier and the charming woman of the world had not mentioned their children. They also — could he doubt it? — must have stood appalled and tormented in the presence of evil bequeathed to the flesh they had created.

He saw more.

He realized a present helplessness to modify conditions which his neglect had brought about; he perceived, with anguish, that he had failed abominably both in the lesser work of his hands and brain, and in the infinitely greater task apportioned to the spirit.

At this moment he knew that he stood in Hell, and that the time was come when his child would join him with the flame of an eternal reproach in her loving eyes.

He found himself outside Stormont Lodge, upon the broad pavement between the road and the Park. He was conscious only of intense misery and despair, and a confounding weakening of the mental faculties. Suddenly the conviction assailed him that he was not responsible for the evil in Mollie, nor for the havoc that might follow. Every specious argument which has fallen glibly from the lips of atheists and agnostics fortified this conviction. He told himself, or something

told him, that existence upon this other side revealed no evidence of a pitying God. Here, as on earth, were the same detestable and incomprehensible injustice, the same insurmountable barriers. Some disembodied spirits, like Fermor, soared upward, but whither and wherefore? The innumerable many remained upon the plane nearest earth, condemned to linger there in ignorance of what might be above them, wiser in some degree than those hampered by the flesh, but as cruelly hampered by the limitations of the spirit.

He experienced a devastating desire to curse God, to blaspheme horribly against the unknown Power who had created Mollie and himself.

It was long past midnight. A few waifs drifted by with the weary, shambling step of those who dare not hasten from ills they know to ills conceivably worse. Above, a pall of darkness seemed to be descending. This affected David with an indefinable terror. He recalled the story of a man imprisoned in a cell which grew smaller and smaller, closing in upon the captive with slow and merciless certainty. Another somewhat similar tale presented itself to his tormented memory. He beheld a man lying upon a soft wide bed, the old-fashioned four-poster. And, inch by inch, the heavy canopy above slid down and down — an impending horror of suffocation and death. The man in the story, paralysed till the last moment, had escaped. But David could not escape. He seemed to be rooted to the earth, while the darkness encompassed him.

It began to rain with tropical violence. Within a quarter of an hour the gutters were brimmed with muddy water; the flood poured down with a sullen, continuous roar. A woman miserably clad, holding her baby to her breast, staggered past David. He heard her exclaim piteously, "O my God, my God!" Hard by, crouching beneath the iron palings of the Park, was a child, a hunted wraith of hunger and disease. It coughed unceasingly. And then a magnificent motor purred homeward, scattering mud to right and left of it. David caught a glimpse of a beautiful girl alone in the car. Her eyes were half-closed; upon her lips, red as the feathers of a flamingo, was a complacent smile, as if this favourite of fortune were contrasting her sense of well-being with the misery upon both sides of her. Upon Mollie's face the father had remarked the same complacent smile. Out of the darkness flashed this radiant presentment of rank and fashion and beauty; into the mirk it vanished to the accompaniment of that almost bestial purr, the soft triumphant note of the machine-made civilization indifferent to the elemental forces from which it was immune.

At that moment temptation descended upon David like the tons of water which were falling about him. He realised with a consciousness infinitely more intense than anything he had experienced during his earth life, the supreme power of the imagination. The potentialities of evil ravaged him. He apprehended the derisive words of the famous soldier, the still more derisive laughter of the woman of the world.

He had found out what he could do without limitation.

The lusts of the flesh were still his. And he could see to the depths, although no vision of the heights had been vouchsafed to him.

As the sins of the imagination took possession with an intoxicating enticement, he became once more aware of that tremendous power dragging him downward. And the gratification of appetites hitherto suppressed seemed to be the one thing left, the greatest thing. He could enjoy illimitably those carnal pleasures which he had disdained. He could enjoy them the more because he could share them with others. He knew that he could enter at will bodies ripe and ardent for voluptuous passions, and, with their passions sated, their bodies enervated, he could abandon them, seeking other habitations in a never-ending quest, with a spirit whose inordinate appetite would but increase for the food it craved.

The rain ceased falling; the chill darkness fled. Up and down the vast thoroughfare gleamed and glittered the white arc lights, reflected ten thousand times in every pool and puddle upon road and pavement. From the windows of the houses facing the Park shone a few subdued topaz-coloured flames of gas and lamp. Above were the stars. Upon the other side of the planet the sun was blazing in stainless skies.

The struggle, the civil war in David's soul, began

with the lifting of the darkness. The powers of light arrayed themselves against their enemies. David felt the attraction from above, the tightening of the golden chain. And once more his will, the omnipotent will to choose, manifested itself. An activity of the mental faculties sprang, armed, into being, the instinct to fight became dominant.

He never knew how long the battle raged, but throughout he was aware of his own responsibility, of his right to direct or misdirect the force within him. And when he was most beset by evil, his failing energies seemed to gather strength from the light which began to transpose itself into sound. In the utter darkness he had heard nothing but the inarticulate roar of the rain, the pitiless chatter and patter of the flood. He heard it still, the monstrous travailing and groaning of evil, but through it and above it, with ever-increasing sweetness, penetrated the finer, attenuated strain.

Presently some phrase, some haunting cadence, struck David as familiar. Not for some time, however, did he realise that he was listening to his own music, the exquisite recitative in "Solomon's Garden."

Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out.

Dazed, utterly confounded, the passionate desire formed itself in David's mind that he might interpret the mystery of this echo of his own music, an echo floating apparently from some celestial choir, an echo incomparably beautiful and sublime. The answer

came to him soft as a flake of snow. This imperishable music which he had created when he was young and strong and clean represented energies directed aright, and perhaps more — a reserve force, a spiritual capital, upon which, so to speak, he could draw, the asset standing between him and ruin.

But the final struggle was yet to come. Listening to his own music so marvellously orchestrated, he was transported to Mary's garden, where he beheld again the very flowers that had inspired his loveliest themes. He could see it as it was, ravaged by weeds, and as it had been in Mary's lifetime — all glorious. And here, at the moment when he deemed himself free, the weeds seem to twine themselves about his soul, tentacles imbued with a terrible life and strength which sucked life and power from him.

Hardly conscious of anything save the necessity of a last rending effort to escape from a jungle of wanton and pestiferous vegetation, David called upon Mary to destroy the weeds which she had fought and conquered so long ago.

Simultaneously, a loathing of the soft, flexible, caressing tendrils overwhelmed him; for the vision of his child at the mercy of these crawling, poisonous serpents had come to him with dazzling vividness. And, even as he had called upon Mary — and apparently in vain — to save himself, so now with more desperate invocation he besought God to save Mollie. If he must perish, let her live.

Minutes or years might have passed when he found himself upon a lofty alp, looking down upon the other peaks rising majestically out of masses of cloud lying motionless upon the snow-fields they covered. The sharpness of edge of these peaks, their austerity of line, their symbolism expressive of the Titanic, convulsive energy which had exposed such bare bones of the earth, their everlastingness, accorded with David's new perceptions. He, too, stood bare beneath high heaven, above the mists of earth, yet of earth, and rooted tremendously in earth. If the desires of the flesh had passed away, the fact that they had left him naked and ashamed remained. He felt that he could never return to the planes below, and he told himself miserably that he could journey no nearer to the planes above. Was he doomed, like these icy rocks, to remain where he was, at the mercy of the winds of remorse, drenched by his own unavailing tears?

Such rags of self-righteousness as may have remained vanished. From some deep, unexplored zone of consciousness, what he had done and left undone throughout his terrestrial existence confronted him. He became his own judge; or, shall we say that the God within him rose clear-eyed and omniscient to unveil the Man? There was no process of introspection. His record spread itself before him.

Below, abysses yawned, while vast glaciers moved imperceptibly upon their appointed way, regardless of all obstacles; into their unplumbed crevasses roared masses of melting snow. These were the voices of

the mountain, the travelling and groaning of gigantic elemental forces subservient to the eternal laws of Energy and Motion. And in the spiritual world, these laws manifested the same evolution, the same sequence, the same progress.

Since Mary's death, David had not prayed. At the moment of her passing to the other side, he had besought her to come back; and that prayer — addressed primarily to her — remained unanswered for a reason which he was now able to perceive. The finer spirits, purged of the earth-taint, could not return, being subject to some law whose workings no earth-fettered slave was permitted to behold, a law as immutable as that which governed the progress of a glacier.

It has been recorded that David had lost faith in revealed religion, because, so he contended, it was not revealed to him. If we except his futile attempts to seek truth in the "parlours" of mediums and clairvoyants, we behold him, like the weed on Lethe's wharf, "rotting at ease" in the Tom Tiddler's ground of a facile success. Deliberately he had put from him religious thought and aspiration.

Now, his conviction of the continuity of life, his recognition of his organism as one of infinite vibrations, and lastly the supreme fact that his love for Mary and his child had not only survived the disintegration of the flesh, but had increased immeasurably in intensity and purity, produced in him an abasement and humility impossible to set forth.

Nevertheless, the quality of this humility must be briefly indicated. It is significant that at such a crisis he accepted the law which constrained him to linger on earth. There was no rebellion, no selfish desire that this law should be suspended or modified for his advantage. He bowed his head beneath an inexorable verdict. Perhaps for the first time since his adoption by Fermor he resigned himself to the Divine Will, preferring his passionate request in meek obedience to It, and exhibiting thereby a nascent faith in It. For he prayed with a supplication which was absolutely selfless that he might, while on earth, be permitted to uproot the weeds in his child's soul, that a communication might be established between them along which, in undiluted essence, love might cleanse and redeem her.

While he prayed, he became conscious of an uplifting, as if tender hands were raising him. He passed into a warmer air. He tried to open his eyes, and, failing in the attempt, resigned himself quite contentedly to blindness. He knew that an "ampler ether" encompassed him, that he was suffused with an ecstasy entrancingly sweet. Some of us have experienced this ecstasy in dreams. We have suffered abominably, tossed hither and thither upon turbulent waves of perplexity, and terror, vividly conscious that we are at the mercy of an unknown and cruel element, and then, quite suddenly, a soothing balm seems to be shed upon the waters, and we find ourselves lulled to rest, drifting gently to some safe harbourage, a

sanctuary of the spirit, wherein we know nothing save the glad conviction that it is well with us.

Wafted upward, David still prayed that the love so strong within him might serve definite purpose. Borne along, swiftly and smoothly, his faith that his prayer would be answered seemed to increase as he ascended. Despair, which had clutched his heart, was left behind. He was mounting, mounting upon the Heavenly Way. . . .

Then the miracle happened. He heard Mary's voice, calling him by name.

"David!"

Speechless with delight, he once more attempted to open his eyes. He seemed to feel the touch of fingers upon his lids.

He tried to speak. Mary's fingers pressed his lips into silence. Mary continued:

"You have come to me, David; I could not go to you. You came upon the wings of love, and upon the same wings you must return."

Then he must leave her?

She answered the unspoken question swiftly:

"You desire to help Mollie?"

He bowed his head.

"If your prayer be granted, David, if a chance be given to you to redeem our daughter, the conditions may be quite other than what you think them to be. Are you prepared to go back unconditionally? Do you surrender absolutely?"

Again he bowed his head in assent.

“Then it shall be so,” said Mary. He fancied that his ear caught and held for an instant a note of triumph, and as this melted upon the silence, he heard a strain of music, exquisitely sweet and penetrating, a celestial harmony so sublimated in quality and tone that it seemed to bear the same relation to earthly music which the ampler Life and Love of the other side bore to the life and love of earth. The beauty of it, its surpassing significance as a medium of expression, its inevitable divergence, as a message, from the masterpieces so familiar to him, transcended finite imagination and feeling. He could only compare it to the tones and semi-tones of Mary’s voice, which he had recognized instantly as hers and yet so purified as to be entirely different.

As her lips touched his he lost consciousness.

BOOK III

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

ST. JOHN, VIII. 32.

“We have shewn that amid much deception and self-deception, fraud and illusion, veritable manifestations do reach us from beyond the grave. The central claim of Christianity is thus confirmed, as never before. If our own friends, men like ourselves, can sometimes return to tell us of love and hope, a mightier Spirit may well have used the eternal laws with a more commanding power. There is nothing to hinder the reverent faith that though we be all ‘Children of the Most Highest,’ He came nearer than we, by some space by us immeasurable, to That which is infinitely far. There is nothing to hinder the devout conviction that He of His own act ‘took upon Him the form of a servant,’ and was made flesh for our salvation, foreseeing the earthly travail and the eternal crown. ‘Surely before this descent into generation,’ says Plotinus, ‘we existed in the intelligible world; being other than now we are, and some of us Gods; clear souls, and minds unmixed with all existence; parts of the Intelligible, nor severed thence; nor are we severed even now.’”

F. W. H. MYERS.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CONDITIONS

UPON the morning after David's accident, Mollie Archdale stood opposite a glass, smiling at the image reflected therein with something of the complacency of Narcissus. Only the night before an amorous and enterprising youth, whose compliments were sincere if crude, had said: "I suppose whenever you want to give yourself a jolly good time, you stand in front of a looking-glass." Mollie had answered, "Of course." The youth was handsome and he danced quite too beautifully, but every débutante knew that he was 'impossible' from a matrimonial point of view. Mollie crossed the room and picked up the book which she had been reading in bed. Holding it gingerly in her pretty hands, she made a grimace, before she slipped it into a drawer. Then, from the same drawer, she took a cartoon which had recently appeared in a society paper. The subject was a man overlooking and overshadowing a vast country. Underneath was the legend, "Coming men cast their shadows before," and below, in very black type, "His Excellency."

Staring at the cartoon, Mollie smiled and frowned. A little laugh bubbled from her lips, and she murmured: "Their Excellencies." A close observer might have

noticed that her fingers just trembled, as she examined more carefully the masterful face which seemed to stare back at her with a persistency of gaze even greater than her own.

It was Henry Middleton, of whom mention has been made. He belonged to a small group of Balliol men, of which Newsom was a member. Middleton had succeeded as conspicuously as poor Newsom had failed, Newsom having taken higher honours as a scholar. Middleton entered public life as the private secretary of the Prime Minister. His subsequent career is so well known that we may be excused from dwelling upon it in detail, but it may be said that his success as a public man surprised everybody who knew him, except his tutor and, possibly, himself. Heavy in manner and appearance, dull in ordinary conversation, he was gifted with an extraordinary capacity for coördinating facts and setting them forth in a quiet, deep, convincing voice. Because he was sincere and very rich, the public were of opinion that Middleton had no axe to grind other than the official one with which he decapitated the hydra heads of ignorance and dishonesty. For the rest, he was thirty-six years of age; and Felicia Stormont, who had known him since he was a boy at Eton, affirmed that he had never been in love till he met Mollie Archdale.

It is quite certain that he was in love with her. And obviously, he had made up his mind to marry her, setting about the accomplishment of this new desire with the same plodding, indefatigable persistency

which had crowned other endeavours with success. Two days after meeting Mollie he said to Mrs. Stormont, imperturbably:

“Is this the wife you promised to find for me?”

It was characteristic of Mrs. Stormont to reply briskly, “How clever you are!” Inwardly, she was accusing herself of stupidity in not having foreseen such a likely combination. If Middleton’s administrative abilities should justify a big Colonial appointment, the one thing lacking would be a wife, a woman of beauty and charm, not necessarily brilliant, but young and plastic, healthy and ambitious. David Archdale’s daughter seemed to have been expressly designed to be his complement. To bring about such a match would be a consummate triumph.

“I am not clever,” Middleton had replied, “but as a rule I get what I want. Who is she?”

“Good Heavens! You don’t know? Why, David Archdale’s girl, to be sure.”

“And who is David Archdale? The name sounds familiar.”

“Sounds! You have picked the right word. Stringed instruments, brazen trumpets, voices of men and women, have sounded that name from pole to pole. At this moment, my poor Henry, you are wearing an ‘Archdale’ collar. He wrote the ‘Peer and the Peri’ and ‘When Cuckoos Call’.”

“Did he?”

"You are brutally ignorant, as Matthew Arnold once said of a famous dean and schoolmaster."

"True."

"Therefore it behooves you to marry a wife who knows what you don't."

"True again. I suppose all your drones are buzzing about Miss Archdale?"

"I do not encourage — drones."

"She's a radiant creature."

"Am I to tell little Miss Honey-pot that you say so?"

"I'll tell her myself, thank you."

Mrs. Stormont smiled discreetly. At luncheon, upon the following day, Mollie found herself next to the great man of whose remarkable achievements in and out of the House of Commons she had received a very prettily worded account, ending as follows:

"The extraordinary thing about Henry Middleton is that he seems absolutely indifferent to us. No woman, so far as I know, has ever challenged his interest. If he doesn't utter a word, don't be surprised."

"Of course he won't talk to me," said Mollie.

To her astonishment and pride he talked to nobody else.

Within a week the girl guessed what he wanted, and it was made plain what he could give in return. Mollie, let it be remembered, had left the small world of Art, which holds so many agreeable, interesting people, for the infinitely larger world of politics and affairs. Meeting upon intimate terms the men who were making history instead of painting pictures and

writing plays, she had been impressed by a new point of view, which effectively dwarfed the old. Apparently, her Tritons were minnows in the estimation of millionaires and statesmen, small fry to be welcomed with a patronizing smile and dismissed with a careless nod. Not many young girls came to Stormont Lodge, but even those with hair down their backs knew who 'counted' and who didn't. Henry Middleton, for instance, 'counted' enormously. The cartoonist summed up the situation when he portrayed him overshadowing a continent. His wife would be a very great lady indeed.

Mollie laid aside the cartoon, and picked up the photograph of her father. As she did so, her face softened. No one could doubt her affection for and pride in her father. She was reflecting that she must have inherited ambition from him, and that he would be pleased to see his daughter at home in the seats of the mighty. Nevertheless, conscience pricked her, because she guessed that a too prompt acceptance of Mrs. Stormont's offer had distressed him. Well, the future would vindicate her.

At this moment, she had a vision of a wedding in Westminster Abbey beneath the eyes and ægis of Royalty! She saw herself, upon her father's arm, advancing to the altar, toward a man who overshadowed continents!

A tap upon the door put to flight the strains of "The Voice that breathed o'er Eden." Mrs. Stormont entered.

At once, Mollie perceived that something serious had taken place. Her friend kissed her in silence, and, leading her to the bed, sat down beside her.

"What has happened?" gasped Mollie. "Tell me quick."

"There has been an accident in France."

"To father?"

"Yes."

"He is not — dead?"

"A telegram has just come to say that he is still alive. Mr. Fermor is dead. The accident was terrible. The papers this morning report your father's death, but that evidently is a mistake."

Mrs. Stormont added details, softening them as much as possible. The telegram had stated that the injured man was unconscious and likely to remain so till the end. Mollie seemed to be stunned. She did not weep; she accepted passively kisses and protestations of sympathy and affection. When, at length, her piteous silence provoked the exclamation "Child, child, can't you say something — anything?" she muttered almost inaudibly: "It is a judgment on me."

"A judgment on — you?"

"I left him to come here. I wanted to come. I was getting bored at home. At the time I saw something in father's face. He would have liked me to stay. But he was too proud to say so. I'm sure he knew that I wanted to come to you. Did he?"

Mrs. Stormont prevaricated.

"It was natural at your age that you should want things he could not give."

"Natural to want to leave the kindest father in the world?"

"Natural to want change."

"I left him, and now he has left me."

She began sobbing, refusing to be comforted. Mrs. Stormont wisely tried other means to stem a torrent of grief and self-reproach.

"We start for Blois as soon as possible. You must get ready. My maid is packing my things. Shall I help you to pack yours?"

"Please," said Mollie.

During the journey to Paris, Mollie prayed that she might be permitted to see her father alive. Being still a child in many respects, she desired to bargain with Omnipotence, professing herself eager to pay to the uttermost farthing whatever might be exacted. Let her be given the consolation of asking his pardon and receiving it. One glance from his eyes would suffice.

As they drove to Victoria the boys were shouting: "David Archdale still alive!"

At the station the posters of an evening paper proclaimed the fact in huge black letters upon a yellow ground. Mollie said to Mrs. Stormont, "Does the public really care?"

Mrs. Stormont replied: "He delighted millions of tired men and women. Of course they care."

Between the constant reiteration of her prayer, Mollie tried to see her father and herself. Glorifying him, she abased herself. Mrs. Stormont, gazing at her pale beautiful face, marvelled at the change which a few hours had wrought. The child, beneath sorrow's touch, had become a woman. Once Mollie whispered:

"I never told Father how much I loved him."

At Paris, they learned that David was still alive; the doctors were careful to add nothing more.

Rushing through the valley of the Loire, Mrs. Stormont saw a lovely peaceful country revealing itself at earliest dawn; woods and fields sparkling with light and air and dew. The intimate charm of a pastoral landscape appeals, with poignant significance, to the worldly and weary, because they have forsaken it, because they know that they have excluded themselves from a paradise to which with rare exceptions they can never return.

"If I were not here," thought Mrs. Stormont, "I should be just going to bed in London."

She attempted to consider the claims of the simple life. It had never appealed to a mind — quickened at an early age and polished by continual friction — which had sought the new rather than the true with feverish interest and energy. Comedy delighted Felicia Stormont; upon Tragedy she turned her back. Her vitality, her superb health, her capacity for enjoyment had never failed. Mary Archdale once spoke of her as a "front-seater," a "first-nighter," a "monopol-

ist." From her youth, society had acclaimed her as a leader. She admitted that she loved a fight, and had played with undiminished keenness all games save the game of love.

She worshipped one God, the Juggernaut of Success.

And now she was sixty! Her doctor had said that she must do less and less during the years to come.

She wondered if she could be happy alone with Mollie in some pretty cottage in the country. Did she love the child? Was it possible that maternal instincts, long dormant, were now about to assert themselves? And, if so, was it not part of her philosophy to cherish and develop them as being a new and exciting experience? Mollie, forlorn and wretched in her corner, began to clutch at her heart-strings.

The train rocked and rattled over a track not too well ballasted as it sped through the vineyards and cornfields of Touraine. So also Felicia Stormont had rattled and prattled through pleasant years, and, now, when she was approaching her destination the noise and pace and cinematographic changes of scene were becoming stale and tedious. She possessed hosts of friends. Was there one whom she truly loved and who truly loved her?

Upon arrival at Blois, Mollie was told that part of her prayer had been granted. David still lived, and his condition was slightly less critical. The doctor at the hospital, Achille Sarthe, a small, dapper, very wide-awake Frenchman, received the ladies.

"We believed," he said, "that life was extinct. It is the most remarkable case of suspended animation that has come before my notice, and, Mesdames, I was a pupil of the illustrious Charcot. I studied at the Salpêtrière. In short, Monsieur was laid out ready for burial when — how shall I put it? — the vital spark seemed to flicker back. The affair is of the most amazing!"

"He is conscious?"

"No. He barely breathes, but the temperature is falling."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Mollie.

Sarthe stole a glance at Mrs. Stormont, who remained silent. Presently, Mollie was taken to a room to lie down. Sarthe would not allow her to see her father.

"At the first possible moment, Mademoiselle, I will take you to him. You must trust me."

But, alone with Mrs. Stormont, he went into details. The body had been cruelly crushed, and the head also had sustained injuries.

"It is almost certain," he added, "that the optic nerves are destroyed. If he recovers he will be blind and a cripple for life."

Mrs. Stormont hesitated, and then said gently:

"It would be better for him and his daughter if he died?"

"A thousand times — yes. Mademoiselle is so young, so pretty, so charming. An only child, you say, Madame? Well, if he lives, she must become his slave. Alas! life is an abominable thing in cases like these."

Mrs. Stormont inclined her head.

Three days passed. Upon the morning of the fourth day, David opened his lips and whispered:

"Mary?"

The nurse answered in French, explaining his condition in a few words and enjoining silence. By a sign David showed that he understood, that consciousness had returned, that he was sane.

A few minutes later Mollie was summoned. When she kissed him he muttered, "Is it Mollie?"

"It is Mollie," she whispered. "Your own Mollie, who loves you."

During the week that followed he lay semi-conscious, knowing little of any feeling other than acute pain, and that his shattered flesh was being tenderly cared for. Bandages covered his eyes and most parts of his body. One by one they were removed. And then the truth was broken to him by his child.

He was incurably blind.

Sarthe had prepared Mollie for a piteous scene. But David exhibited remarkable fortitude. Sarthe explained this astonishing resignation:

"He does not yet realize. He has not recovered from the shock to the brain cells."

But the next day, as Mollie sat beside him, David said quietly:

"I have been spared to finish 'Solomon's Garden.'"

From this moment he made rapid progress. Very soon he was able to ask questions which Sarthe

answered. David could remember nothing except that last vivid impression of the granite wall racing at the car.

"The automobile was utterly smashed," said Sarthe. "And poor Monsieur Fermor, too. Near the wall was a heap of weeds. You must have pitched on that, and then rolled to the middle of the road, where two peasants found you."

"Two peasants?"

Some inflection of his voice challenged Sarthe's attention.

"Yes; two peasants were passing. They brought you here. Honest fellows! It seems that your pocket-book, full of notes, was lying beside you. I have it safe."

"My pocket-book? How odd!"

"Odd?"

"I seem to remember vaguely what you tell me."

"Impossible."

"And then?"

"We believed you to be quite dead for several hours. We tried the usual tests."

"I seem to remember that I was dead. Everything else is shadowy, but I remember the smash, and being in the middle of the road, and two peasants, and — and — being dead."

"*Monsieur*, don't try to remember anything more."

"There is nothing more to remember," said David.

A month passed. Mrs. Stormont returned to London

upon the day when David was moved to a small cottage overlooking the Loire. Throughout the warm June days he would lie upon a couch placed beneath a weeping willow, whose branches drooped over the river. Mollie ministered to him devotedly, aflame to solace and serve, jealous even of the nurse in attendance. Mrs. Stormont, taking leave of her, had said:

"When your father is strong enough to be left with the Pignerols, you must come to me for a change."

"I shan't leave him," Mollie replied.

"You have become very dear to me," said Mrs. Stormont: "so dear," she added quietly, "that you must allow me to make your life as easy as possible."

Mollie thanked her and kissed her, but she whispered, in the voice so curiously like Mary's: "Perhaps my life has been made too easy. I have been a selfish little beast, and — thank God! — I know it."

After Mrs. Stormont's departure, David spoke warmly of her kindness. When Mollie remained silent, he asked wonderingly:

"Wasn't she kind to you?"

"Too kind. Father, it makes me hot with shame when I think of how I gobbled up everything she offered. Kind? If you could have seen my room. It was done up expressly for me. All in white and blue — a sort of *bonbonnière*."

"In white and blue?" repeated David, interrogatively.

"There was even a pale blue carpet."

"Stop!"

The word was spoken so imperatively that Mollie was startled. To her utter confounding, David said, laboriously, "Do you read in bed?"

"Sometimes." She blushed, but the blush vanished in astonishment when David continued in the same hesitating, heavy tone:

"I remember a room in blue and white, and of you lying in bed, asleep, with a book upon the coverlet. Did I dream it?"

"You never saw my room."

"Perhaps you described it to me."

"I am quite sure I didn't."

"For an instant I seemed to see the room. Now it has faded. My head is still queer. I — I haven't mentioned it to you or Sarthe, but no music comes to me, not a note."

"Good gracious, as if it could!"

"You think it will come back? 'Solomon's Garden' must be finished."

"Of course it will."

"But if it — shouldn't?"

"Father!"

"Long ago, I told your mother that the darkness terrified me when I was a child, because of the silence. 'Solomon's Garden' was written in the sunshine. Mollie, it will be awful if the music does not come back."

She heard his voice, so finely controlled during

weeks of pain, sob in his throat; and the sob annihilated the last barrier between them. She understood all that had been suppressed — weakness, fear, horror! To that weakness and terror, the strength and courage dormant in her responded. David felt her soft cheek against his, her firm young arms encircled his body. Mary's voice, which had sustained him during those never-to-be-forgotten days when failure and despair impended, thrilled again in his ears.

"Darling father, the music will come back when you are ready to receive it; and I have a secret to tell you. I've been practising writing music. I'm getting such a dab at it. When the pixies begin to do their duty again, and it's very thoughtful of them to have let you alone, I shall be ready to take down what they say. I shall love working with you."

"You blessed child!"

"Blessed! Didn't you hate me, when I left you — didn't you?"

"Hate you?"

"I saw what I had done too late, and I hadn't the pluck to say so. And at Mrs. Stormont's I thought of my food, and my pretty clothes, and of the big splash I was going to make. There — it's out. I feel heaps better. You asked me just now if I read in bed. Father, I read two or three books which would have given you fits to see in my hand. Are you appallingly shocked?"

He held her tightly to him.

"Men of my age are not easily shocked. As between

you and me, Mollie, perhaps the only absolutely shocking thing would be deceit and hypocrisy."

Upon the following day, he saw Sarthe alone. The little man was free from the prejudice and self-complacent cocksureness of many country practitioners. David knew that he was an enthusiast upon psychology: familiar with and keenly interested in the work of Bernstein, Janet, Pitrés and Voisin: empty names to David till he was made to understand how profoundly their studies might be brought to bear upon his peculiar case.

"I had another singular experience yesterday," began David. "My daughter described a room into which in the flesh I have most certainly never entered. Yet I remembered it mistily, as I remember the peasants finding my body and the pocket-book. And since, again and again, I have had a glimpse of other things which seem to flash before me and disappear."

"Yes. yes. A common experience."

"Where was my mind, when my body lay as you supposed dead?"

"Your mind alone can answer that question, your inner mind, which forgets nothing."

"My inner mind? My father-in-law, Professor Pignerol, is always talking of the inner mind."

"What! Louis Pignerol is your father-in-law? We used to think highly of Louis Pignerol; but he is a Quixote trying to reconcile what can be observed in this material world with dogmas and doctrines which depend entirely upon ill-supported tradition and faith."

"I dismissed his theories as mere idle speculations."

"You dismissed them, Monsieur? Let me tell you that our thoughts and the thoughts of others are not to be dismissed. They remain. That has been proved to the hilt by men whose authority cannot be questioned, by the most enlightened psychologists all over the world. The inner mind never forgets. When that is fully realized, we may be more careful about our thoughts and the thoughts of others. For the rest, it is quite possible that your mind did leave your body. I could cite a dozen well-attested cases in support of it. Also, in nearly all these cases of spiritual activity remembrance is suspended when the brain resumes its functions."

"Has it been proved that we have two minds?"

"I thought the duality of the human mind was established everywhere. Certainly you have two minds; the one works through the senses. The other works when the senses are in abeyance. For example, the inner mind can see and hear and touch and smell when those senses have been destroyed."

"You affirm that I could see with my inner mind?"

"The inner mind of a blind man in the hypnotic state can be made to travel to distant countries and bring back reliable information. It is, in short, a separate entity independent of bodily functions."

"Will you hypnotize me?"

Sarthe hesitated.

"I would rather not, Monsieur. You are making

a remarkable recovery. And I believe in leaving well enough alone."

He hurried away, gesticulating and muttering to himself, conscious that he had put from him an immense temptation. He would have liked to hypnotize his patient.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CREED OF A HAPPY MAN

THE Professor — who would have come to Blois had he not been chained to a schoolmaster's desk — was the first to welcome David when he touched English soil. His genial tones rang out: “*Mon fils*, you look better than I had dared to expect. What a vitality is yours! Well, well, the holidays have begun; the long days which we shall spend together. I have planned pleasant things.”

David remembered that this summer vacation was to have been devoted to the *magnum opus*. How cheerfully Pignerol laid aside his own work, whenever in matters small or great he might be of service to others!

Pignerol then told David that many distinguished persons had travelled to Southampton to greet him. A committee was in waiting at the South-Western Hotel. Outside the docks a crowd had collected. David heard once more the cheers of the multitude, who acclaimed him as if he were a conquering hero instead of a shattered invalid, limping painfully upon crutches and guided by the hand of a girl of eighteen. Presently he was listening to protestations of friendship, to the reading of a gracious telegram from his Sovereign, to the blare of a band playing one of his popular marches.

Thelluson happened to be a member of the committee.

"Old Wrest and I were at the Buskin when the news came over the 'ticker' that you were smashed to bits. We were appalled."

"Wrest and you were at the Buskin?"

Thelluson was struck by the odd expression upon David's face. He continued cordially:

"Wrest and Newsom and I. David, my boy, gallant fellows like you aren't easily killed, eh?"

"Were you in the smoking-room?"

"We're always in the smoking-room at ten. Wrest couldn't come down to-day, but he's at your service, if you want anything done. Hang it, we're all only too anxious to help. Man of many friends you are!"

Others said the same thing. At Sherborne, where the reception was of a domestic character, old fellows pressed his hands who could remember the days when he sang "Oh, for the wings of a dove," and added so materially to the collections. Miss Rachel Callow brought flowers and faltering greetings. David felt himself to be borne away, inundated, by a tidal wave of pity, sympathy, and emotion. When he reached Pignerol's house, he was obliged to lie down.

"What a welcome!" said the Professor. "You are tired out, but there is no tonic like affection. People love you, *mon fils*. That is a great consolation, my poor boy, a true triumph."

"If I could have seen their faces."

"With your imagination that is easy. We will talk

of this when you are rested, but Mollie has written to me. Her letters were full of your courage and patience. David, my dear, dear son, you have won a great victory."

"It's not won yet," said David grimly.

Next day he remained in bed, limp in mind and body, unable to concentrate thought upon either present, past, or future. The three seemed to be inextricably mingled: a tangle of memories, ambitions, and speculations. The room in which he lay was so familiar; he had occupied it often before his marriage and after; and — now — a different man seemed to stare at the engravings upon the walls, seeing nothing, but knowing — because he had asked the question — that not an article of furniture had been moved.

The silence of Sherborne oppressed him. In Blois, during the daytime, he had become accustomed to the innumerable sounds of a French town, which linked him, helpless though he was, to the activities without.

At his request, he spent the morning alone. But, immediately after luncheon, Mollie came to sit with him, bringing with her an atmosphere of youth, and high spirits, and excitement, prattling eagerly of old friends and the things which engrossed them. A game of tennis had been promised. She had bought a new racquet. The lawn was in tip-top condition.

"It is good to be back," she concluded.

David did not keep her long, divining her wish to be out of doors in the sunshine where she might forget,

poor child! his darkness which had cast its shadow over her. He heard a gay laugh, as she ran downstairs to join her friends, leaving behind some splendid roses sent from the Castle. Throughout the afternoon kindly messages, with or without flowers, were arriving at Pignerol's house, and telegrams from all parts of the United Kingdom.

Many friends slipped in for a few minutes' talk: talk which never varied, which harped pleasantly but interminably upon his recovery and the great gain thereby to the world. One and all seemed to take for granted that he would write more musical comedies, more songs such as "In Cowslip Time," more waltzes and polkas whose very names seemed to tinkle exasperatingly.

After dinner, alone with Pignerol, he said: "I want you to do me a service. The score of 'Solomon's Garden' is in my music room at Portland Place. Will you go up to town and fetch it?"

"Of course."

"I shall finish it, and produce it. Mollie and I have been talking of nothing else."

"I am delighted to hear this. How Fermor would have rejoiced."

"Oddly enough, I can't remember a bar of it — except in my dreams. At the moment of waking I hear some theme; and then it goes. What an odd thing remembrance is!"

"Say rather recollection. Remembrance is constant, recollection fickle and unreliable."

David hesitated, and then added slowly: "I want to talk to you about many things. You can help me."

"Willingly, willingly."

"You know that those doctors over there believed me to be dead."

"So Mollie wrote."

"What Sarthe calls the inner mind — I prefer the old-fashioned word 'soul' — appears to be most active when the senses are in abeyance."

"Of course."

"What was my soul doing when my body lay dead?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I am convinced that it was on a journey. Thelluson told me yesterday that he and Wrest were in the club smoking-room when the news of my death reached them. Before the words were out of his mouth, I knew it; I remembered somehow seeing Wrest and Thelluson and Newsom."

"This is most interesting."

"Not a day passes but some chance allusion, a word, perhaps, sets vibrating a chord of memory. I am beginning to believe that I saw my own body picked up and placed in a cart, that I walked into the club, that I stood by Mollie's bed."

"Why not?"

"Suppose I was dead."

"Ah, my son, that is a wonderful thought."

"Mary and I promised each other that we would come back. She did not come back. Or rather, if

she did, I was not aware of it. But I swore that I would come back, if I could. Perhaps I did."

"In my opinion it is possible."

"You must be honest with me."

"David, I have made researches which I venture to hope may help to establish, upon a scientific basis, the law of continuity of life. For all time this has been the creed of the human race: a tremendous argument in its favour. To-day, the men of greatest intelligence are demanding proofs other than those which have satisfied generations of thinkers. I believe that these proofs will be forthcoming, because the demand for them is so immense and so importunate. We are knocking at a door which must, sooner or later, be opened. And myriads are approaching that door from a thousand directions."

"Mary spoke of that."

"Sarthe, of course, has investigated seeming miracles which the inner mind can accomplish when the normal functions of the brain are suspended. The French are far ahead of us in this particular field. Unhappily, they are divided, not in their search for the truth, but in the conclusions which they have formulated upon the mass of evidence so admirably sifted by them. And the high priests of science are as dogmatic and obstinate as the high priests of religion. The best men, the most sincere, the most unselfish, the most learned, are also the most timorous and backward in accepting anything new which may conflict with their own convictions and beliefs. Till quite recently,

imagination, which leads us blindfold to treasures of knowledge, has been mistrusted by investigators who ought to have recognized it, as the greatest factor in all discoveries. My old friends, the men with whom I worked in Paris, have denounced me as a humbug, because I have cherished my imagination and allowed to it full scope. It has carried me to heights — and depths.”

David sighed. Then, after a long pause, he said:

“I have always wished to know where you stand.”

“I stand upon a mosaic pavement, upon bits of what I conceive to be truth collected from all the religions of mankind.”

“You accept Christ’s divinity and resurrection?”

“I do.”

“What else do you believe?”

“I shall attempt to tell you; my creed is my dearest possession, but I have never proclaimed it, not even to my children. It is part of that creed to encourage others to search for their beliefs and not to accept them ready-made. The early Christians paid for their creed with their lives. What do we pay? Obviously, I lay myself open to attack, because the teachers insist upon the unreliability of the lay mind. And I, as you know, am a stickler for authority when it concerns itself with matters of fact. Upon matters of faith, I am willing to learn from a child what may have been withheld from an archbishop.”

Pignerol paused before continuing. Perhaps he was reflecting that a creed loses the vitality it seeks

to express when it becomes concrete. And perhaps he shrank from putting into words thoughts which had been jealously guarded during a lifetime. He was a modest as well as a brave man, and because he had respected the beliefs of others, he had the more solicitude for his own.

"I was not unlike you, David, when I left school. I was consumed by a desire to succeed. I studied successful men and their methods. And I soon realized that concentration of will was at the back of human achievement. With it, mediocre men came to the front, without it the most brilliant fell behind. I wanted to win a scholarship. But apparently I had not a chance. Four out of ten competitors were much cleverer than I. But I had the strongest will; and I won. True, I worked hard, but so did the others. It was an eye-opener. It led me to the conviction that a man can have within reasonable limits anything he wants, if he wants it with every fibre of his being."

"Would will-power restore my eyesight?"

"I said within reasonable limits. Those limits, which I dare not define, are greater than we are as yet aware of. The next step was to find out what was worth the wanting and having. I was studying pathology, and confronted daily by terrible phases of disease and misery. It took me less than six months to decide that health was worth the wanting. I was thin, dyspeptic, and subject to tormenting headaches. Fortunately, I fell in with a man who had concentrated his intelligence upon physical culture. He made me throw

drugs out of my window, and ordered me to leave that window open day and night. Fresh air, exercise, plenty of good food, did the rest. I became a strong vigorous man. Want number one was satisfied. I passed my medical exams, and attacked psychology under a famous savant now dead. He was the unhappiest of men. Again and again he would say to me: 'Louis, look at that workman. He is laughing and singing. He is happy. He earns a few francs a day. Gladly would I change places with him!' I begun to study happiness. There is any amount of happiness in the world, David, but few look for it in the right place. Children have almost a monopoly of it. I wanted furiously to be happy. My health was my greatest asset. The right man had helped me to find that. Long afterward, the right woman taught me that happiness, like health, can be had for the wanting, but you must want it so intensely that other wants have to be abandoned. I wanted furiously to be rich and famous, so happiness evaded me for a season."

"Mary said once that you could have become rich and famous."

"Probably. I put aside such ambitions when I saw that they exacted sacrifices too great. I had to choose between fame and my wife, between wealth and my children. I was offered two positions, one of tremendous responsibility in Calcutta, and the other my mastership here, which insured a competence for me and mine."

"You have had no regrets?"

"I am human — there have been moments, long ago past, when I looked back at the cities of the plain, but I chose right. I have been a happy man. Be happy and you can hardly help being good. And Happiness stays at home; Unhappiness wanders to the uttermost ends of the earth and to the lowest depths of hell."

"This is the happiest household I have ever known."

"Ah! Happiness is as contagious as influenza, probably more so. But, mind you, I could not have been really happy had I not believed in reincarnation. The doctrine permeates nearly all philosophies and has been accepted by the greater portion of the human race. To me it explains adequately the mysteries of sin and suffering, and the apparent injustice involved in lives widely and cruelly differentiated. I pass to the third clause in my creed. I was standing firm upon my belief in the immortality of the soul, and my conviction that it manifests itself through innumerable existences. I called myself in those early days a free-lance. I contended that what I could not understand after patient study was of no use to me in my present existence. Every doctrine which appealed strongly to my reason, I tried to reconcile with my belief in the continuity of life. I went back to Paris to study the dual nature of the mind. That became the third clause in my creed, confirming the others. We come now to my marriage. My wife, whom I adored, lived and died a firm believer in the divinity of Christ. She urged me to restudy the New Testament, and step by

step I came to the fourth clause in my creed: that Christianity is established upon a scientific basis."

"A scientific basis?"

"Christ preached and practised nineteen hundred years ago what we have rediscovered to-day: the power of Faith, the Faith which means recognition of the Universal Mind. Some one has said that 'to realize the manifestation of the Divine which Jesus stands for, and to love it, is the indispensable condition for attaining that access to the Father which means the full development in ourselves of all the powers of the Spirit.'"

"You accept the doctrine of the Trinity?"

"I believe in a God-soul, who has created and interpenetrates the universe. I believe in the God-made flesh. And I believe in the God-Mind, the Holy Ghost. I believe in rewards and punishments which the God within inflicts in this life and in other lives. I believe in the resurrection of the dead; and in the Communion of Saints."

"When did you begin to think independently?"

"When I was seventeen. If a man is because he thinks, then it follows that his spiritual advance depends upon what he thinks. Our thoughts are a barometer by which we can gauge day by day the growth of the soul which is nourished or impoverished by them. If you can know a man by his friends, so also you can know yourself by your thoughts, which are indeed angels or devils to the host who entertains them. Truly has the Psalmist said that some perish through their own imaginations."

“A man’s thoughts, you say, are not his own?”

“He makes them his own by adoption. In this he exhibits his free will. With the thoughts that are not his he can create new thoughts.”

David moved restlessly.

“My thoughts are trying to create something.”

“Yes?”

“A *finale* to ‘Solomon’s Garden.’ My life — so I firmly believe — was spared for just that.”

To this Pignerol made no reply.

Next day he took the early train to London, hoping to be able to return to Sherborne the same day, but about three in the afternoon David received a telegram: —

“Have searched your room thoroughly. No score to be found.”

CHAPTER XIX

MOLLIE PICKS UP STITCHES

UPON receipt of the telegram, David insisted that Mollie should join her grandfather. If necessary, expert assistance must be called in. Let every nook and cranny be searched. His instructions were carried out, but within twenty-four hours Mollie and Pignerol returned empty-handed. "Solomon's Garden" had vanished.

When David was told, he said grimly:

"I destroyed it."

"What?"

"By accident. I guessed what had happened when I got the telegram. Years ago, just after the production of the 'Belle and the Tiger,' I had a burning of old scores and papers. A cupboard was full of what I thought rubbish. I had forgotten the oratorio. Now I can remember distinctly putting it there. I remember as distinctly how tired I got of glancing through that huge mass of manuscript. And at last I bundled what was left into the fire."

Pignerol exclaimed:

"What an awful thing!"

"I must rewrite it from memory," said David.

He began work the next morning, sitting at the piano, and playing over such parts as he could remem-

ber. Then he would dictate the notes to Mollie: a laborious task. Pignerol conceived the happy thought of using a phonograph, which lightened the labour; but long before a week had passed it became plain that David had forgotten much of the old and that no new music would come to him.

We have here an instance of the power of the brain to impose conditions upon the spirit. David, before the accident, had decided — possibly with a resolution greater than he had understood — not to write any more sugary music. He had damned, it will be remembered, the “tinkle-tinkle bell.” Apart from the fact that light and colour transposed themselves into sound for him, and that darkness now overshadowed these, it is probable that a desire on his part to suppress certain fleshly manifestations of his genius had indeed raised a veil even more impenetrable than physical blindness between his higher and lower natures. Pignerol maintained that the will could interpose an insuperable barrier between the spirit and thought-forms which that spirit desired to exclude. To console David, he maintained stoutly that the higher inspiration, so long denied expression, would return, although no man could predict when or how. David remained faithful to his determination to write no more musical comedies. He told Mollie and Pignerol that he wished to give to the world his best or nothing; and every day the conviction deepened that the world, beginning already to clamour for something, might receive nothing.

About a fortnight later, when David happened to be alone, a parlour-maid came in to say that a gentleman wished to see Mr. Archdale most particularly.

"Most particularly?" repeated David. "What name?"

"The gentleman said you didn't know him personally. His name is Mr. Henry Middleton."

"Mr. Henry Middleton?" murmured David vaguely.

Then he remembered. Middleton, of course, was the great man who at Stormont Lodge had flattered Mollie by his attentions. Why had he come to Sherborne?

"I will see Mr. Middleton."

As the maid left the room David reflected that Middleton had come upon a fool's errand. For months Mollie had not mentioned him. He was nothing to her, could be nothing. And yet, if passing through Sherborne he had called upon Mollie as a mere act of courtesy, why had he wished to see her father "most particularly?" When Middleton entered, David held out his hand with a faint smile.

"Mrs. Stormont has spoken to me of you."

Henry Middleton replied heavily:

"Has she?"

David tried to visualize him. He remembered vaguely a large ungainly figure not without dignity and power, and a long, narrow, impassive face which lent itself to caricature. Once, he had heard Middleton speak at a big public meeting. Beginning badly, with the sympathies of the audience against him, the

man had ended with a triumph, the greater because unexpected and due to the speaker's sincerity of purpose and his mastery of a difficult subject.

"She said you always had your own way."

"Mrs. Stormont made a similar remark about you, Mr. Archdale."

"My way has ended in a blind alley."

"You have my sincerest sympathy. It is very good of you to see me. I had to come."

David waited. Middleton would beat no bushes.

"I am tremendously interested in your daughter. With your permission I should like to remain in Sherborne in the hope of persuading her to become my wife."

This bald but business-like statement provoked another smile. David said tentatively:

"With my permission? Is that necessary?"

"Under the circumstances, I think so."

"Thank you. You have my permission, to win her if you can. But I should say the same to any decent, honourable man."

An awkward silence followed, the sense on the part of both men that they had nothing in common except an interest too great to bear discussion. David was the first to speak:

"You have had a busy session?"

"Very."

"Is it true that you may go to Canada?"

"It is on the cards. Strictly between ourselves, I have been approached. The fact that I am a bachelor is against me."

"I understand."

Pignerol's entrance with Mollie was a welcome interruption. David listened to Mollie's voice, trying to interpret every tone and semitone. Suddenly he realized that he hated Middleton, that he would fight for his own, and that he was justified in so doing.

"He wants Canada more than Mollie," he thought.

Just then Pignerol asked a question which Middleton answered with a precision and knowledge challenging silence and admiration. At this, devils tore David. Almost savagely, he began in his turn to ask for information upon matters concerning which — as Mrs. Stormont had put it — Henry Middleton was indeed brutally ignorant. David begged his visitor to be kind enough to write down the names of a few new books; he wanted to hear about the latest comedy, the picture of the hour, the Australian tenor. David could talk admirably upon such themes; Middleton replied in monosyllables, assuming his stolid, impenetrable mask, admitting, almost clownishly, that he cared nothing for art and was practically tone-deaf and colour-blind. From time to time Mollie expressed mild surprise at his indifference.

"Surely, Mr. Middleton, you read something beside blue books."

"Not much else."

"How dull!"

David smiled discreetly.

"They called me 'Gradgrind' at Oxford."

Middleton took leave after tea. The hospitable

Pignerol asked him to dine on the following day. As soon as he had left, David said irritably:

"That man is a bore. What he does not know about nearly everything worth knowing would fill an encyclopædia."

"Perhaps," said Pignerol, quietly. Then, in the slightly derisive tone which had made David wriggle when he was a boy, he added: "Henry Middleton is, in my opinion, the greatest force for good in English politics to-day, and what he knows about subjects vital to the right government of his country would fill another encyclopædia."

Mollie looked up, conscious of something she was unable to analyze, a dissonance which jarred upon a sensitive ear. She perceived that her father was flushed and ill at ease; and immediately the yearning to console drove out other perceptions not so well defined. She kissed him, whispering:

"How well you talked! But Mr. Middleton listened nearly as well, didn't he?"

Pignerol smiled. His voice warmed into a fuller tone as he exclaimed:

"Bravo, Molliedkins! I must have a kiss on both cheeks for that. How wise you are!"

As instantly David responded.

"I beg Middleton's pardon," he said. "I am an irritable, superficial ass, and a boor to monopolize the talk as I did."

"But Mr. Middleton was charmed. He liked to hear you, father. I know his face quite well by now. He

only looks dull. And he is so modest and unassuming. How are you feeling?"

"My head buzzes with those confounded airs in the Jollity pieces. I thought I had got hold of a motif, when a barrel organ began to grind out 'In Cowslip Time.' I hear it now."

"Let us go for a walk," said Mollie.

Dun days followed. Phrases out of "Solomon's Garden" floated into David's mind in obedience to his intense demand for them, were laboriously picked out on the piano, and then recorded by the phonograph. David said despairingly:

"I was at my best when I wrote it; now I am at my worst. I conceived of my garden as the Garden of the Soul, the Garden of Wisdom. My highest thoughts seemed to transpose themselves into sound. There were moments when I knew that I was flooded with inspiration, and now — nothing — *nothing!*"

"It will come back."

From this position the faithful Mollie refused to move. Pignerol added, emphatically: "Yes, it will come back, because it is there, complete, not a bar missing. Nothing is lost."

"It is lost till it is found."

David's weakness, intensified by frequent bouts of pain, aroused increasing strength in Mollie. Even Pignerol marvelled, as he watched the miracle of transformation, the unfolding of a Soul. He began to talk to Mollie as he had talked to Mary, nourishing her

mind with the thoughts which had lifted him far above the vanities and vexations of a material world.

"You are doing fine work, my Mollie," he would say, with a quaint chuckle. "You are picking up your mother's stitches."

"If I could make Father happier ——"

"But you will, you will. Never doubt that for an instant. Doubt is the devil, Beelzebub himself, my pretty. The serpent Doubt, or Negation, brought about the fall of man. I must read to you a chapter in my book which deals with the Book of Genesis. The Divine Force created Adam, the red clay, and gave to him Eve, the soul. That soul was in its essence universal and good, but if we conceive it as capable of directing and transmitting energy, we must equally conceive it as capable of misdirection. When the complete Man, body and soul, became an agent of the Most High, and an agent gifted with free will, his misdirection of the force imparted to him caused the Fall, and the creation of evil. Hence the necessity of an Atonement. But these are high matters, not to be considered lightly. For the moment it is enough for you to believe that doubt is damnation, and faith the one thing necessary to salvation. Believe that it will be well with your father. I have never lost faith in him. He is not like ordinary men. He is a genius."

"But what is a genius?"

"An advanced human being in whom the mind and soul work harmoniously. The nearer they approach to a true understanding of their separate functions,

the greater the manifestation of genius. Your father, as a boy, astounded us again and again by his perception of truths which we — the Vicar, Fermor and I — had groped for during years. He — a child — seemed to divine what was best for his own development. It was something in him that prevented his being sent to a public school. He was able to repel influences likely to injure him; he seemed to grasp intuitively the things that were right for his development as a musician. He was adopted by the right man; he married the right woman. The result — so Fermor always maintained — was ‘Solomon’s Garden.’ I am no musician, so I did not see this at the time. I know now that up to a point mind and soul had advanced hand in hand. But when he misdirected his aims toward a facile success, I can see plainly how inevitably the mind drifted farther and farther from the soul. But I believe, and you must believe, that the two will come together again. Our belief will help him. He is dependent upon you in a sense which you cannot measure.”

“Do you mean that I am necessary to him?”

“Most emphatically.”

To his surprise, he saw a faint shadow in her eyes, which blurred his vision of her. She said, hesitatingly:

“I can do so little.”

“Pah! What a parrot cry! Little? Do you dare, my Mollielkins, to say what is little or big? Can you measure the influence of one human being upon another? Ah, well, I am beginning to wish that

my book was in print. The influence that a baby, a morsel of pink and white flesh, may have upon the wisest man is incalculable. Your father never discovered what he owed to your mother till she passed to the other side. The work she began, you must finish."

His power of arousing enthusiasm in others, his flaming desire to help those less strong than himself, created an illumination in Mollie, which shone steadfastly in her eyes, as she answered:

"I will have faith. What I can do, I will do."

That night, alone with David, Pignerol dropped the same balm upon an abraded and burning consciousness of failure and humiliation.

"Why did I not die?" David asked. "My music has gone. There is nothing left for a blind cripple to do, except to make the lives of those about him miserable."

"Do you know what you are doing?"

"I am a nuisance to myself and everybody in this house. I am keeping you from your work; I am turning Mollie into a drudge."

"Not so. You are turning Mollie from a rather frivolous, vain, selfish little girl into something like an angel."

"That's the good in her, bless her!"

"Ah, David, you are the instrument which has wrought the change. Had you died, Mollie, I fear, might have never learned to live. You spoiled her; you never saw the weeds in her soul."

"What do you say?"

Pignerol repeated the phrase, slightly astonished at the excitement in David's face.

"The weeds in her soul? Why does that make me thrill? Why do I feel so certain that it is true?" Weeds? And yet" — he passed his hand over a forehead wrinkled by the effort to grasp some fugitive thought — "I did see weeds. Where? When? My God! If — if I knew!"

Pignerol touched him, gently but firmly.

"Knowledge comes to the serene and patient. Be calm, David! Don't speak! I will try to the best of my ability to help you. Lie back in your chair. So. Let me hold your hands. Now, together, let us make a tiny experiment. Put from you these turbulent thoughts and regrets. Imagine, if you can, that you are about to fall into a pleasant sleep. Believe that the light will come."

As he spoke his kind voice had the tender inflection of a woman's, his touch soothed the quivering nerves of his patient; the virtue of a powerful will concentrated upon healing seemed to suffuse the tissues. Presently, David experienced a delicious languor, and then consciousness melted into a profound sleep. When he woke, Pignerol was still holding his hands.

"I dreamed," said David.

"Can you remember your dream?"

"It has gone. Did you hypnotize me?"

"No. I tried to calm you."

"You succeeded. How long have I been asleep?"

"Not a quarter of an hour. Before you fell asleep, you were trying to remember something connected with weeds and Mollie."

"Yes, yes."

"Don't move! Remain as calm as possible. Now, let remembrance work naturally, if it will."

After a long pause, David said uncertainly: "I looked into her mind upon the night when I stood in her room. And what I saw distressed me inconceivably. But now the vision is blurred."

"Something has been accomplished," said Pignerol, releasing David's hands. "Very little, but a step in the true direction. For a moment soul and mind were working in unison. That moment will come again and again, but you must have patience and faith. Good-night, David."

"Good night."

Each day, in the afternoon, Henry Middleton came to Pignerol's house. Often he would stay to dinner, contributing little toward the entertainment beyond an attentive pair of ears. It was noticed that he seemed to have plenty to say when he was alone with Mollie. But Mollie, upon examination, confessed that he talked of his work. He spent his mornings either reading or walking about Sherborne. It leaked out that he had offered funds for a much-needed purpose — the better equipment of the hospital.

Meantime, David made no more attempts to exhibit his daughter's lover in a ridiculous light. He was

ashamed of what he had done. Nevertheless, he disliked Middleton, and this dislike, although passive, made itself felt in the household. To Pignerol, David admitted his conviction that Mollie would accept this stolid, plodding tortoise of a man.

"Because he has so much to offer?"

"I do not say that. I—I don't know. But he has impressed her; he interests her; when he doesn't come she misses him."

"If she marries him, David, you must make this your home."

"You are the most unselfish of men, but I couldn't. Already I reproach myself because you give me your afternoons and evenings."

"Rubbish!"

At this crisis, the burly Lorimer appeared. He had just returned from a holiday abroad, full of plans for the future and with an appetite for work sharpened by six weeks abstinence. With him came the atmosphere of the town, its pungent flavour, its energy and movement. To David's surprise, Lorimer expressed cordial approval of the production of the oratorio.

"Why this complete somersault?" David asked.

"My dear fellow, the moment has come. I shall take delight in relieving you of all responsibility. I promise the Albert Hall, and a galaxy of stars. You are, of course, the man of the hour. Your astounding recovery ——"

"Recovery!"

"I mean the fact that you are alive. It will be said that you were spared to produce a masterpiece."

"I was. Well paragraphed that will make an impression."

Quite unconscious of a derisive note, the worthy Lorimer continued: "Just so. An enormous interest could be worked up. Again I say, leave that to me. A musical comedy from you, at the moment when, when ——"

"When I am half-dead."

"Come, come, you understand. Give me credit for a certain delicacy, but the fact remains that a serious work from a man almost raised from the dead would be taken seriously. It might be expedient to let the public believe that the oratorio is your latest as well as your greatest work —eh?"

"My latest? Um! It is likely to be very late indeed."

"What do you mean? This is the psychological moment."

"Unfortunately the score has been destroyed."

"Impossible."

"I did it — by mistake."

"But surely it's in your head?"

"Bits of it. I have the libretto, and that I can improve, but the music won't come back — except by fits and starts."

"This is upsetting."

"Very."

Accordingly, Lorimer returned to Bond Street

with an unsigned agreement in his pocket. But he told himself that he had inspired David with some of his former ambition. And this was true. The old leaven began to work and ferment. Lorimer's vehement assurance that the oratorio would create a prodigious sensation whetted to fresh keenness David's appetite for recognition.

Morning after morning he would seat himself at the piano, and play over certain themes. Opposite Pignerol's piano stood the small American organ used by Fermor. David would limp from one instrument to the other, treating his theme in half a dozen different ways, but quite unable to make up his mind which was the best. When at length he arrived at a decision, the music was played upon the piano, and then recorded by the phonograph. After that began the hardest labour. Note by note, David would dictate to Mollie, often pausing, always dissatisfied with the result, but persevering with a resolution which Pignerol assured him must bear fruit. Lorimer had undertaken the orchestration of the score.

Presently it became evident to both Mollie and Pignerol that David would break down under this immense strain. Pignerol protested, but David laughed.

"I'm started," he replied grimly. "And I shall go till I drop."

To Mollie's question, "Can we do nothing?" Pignerol answered, "We can watch and pray."

CHAPTER XX

MOLLIE SEES TWO ROADS

IN EARLY September, Henry Middleton left Sherborne, summoned to Scotland by the Prime Minister. David heard of his departure through Pignerol. His passive attitude toward his daughter's lover had made confidence on her part difficult.

"What does this mean?" David asked.

"A big colonial appointment."

"And he has said nothing to Mollie?"

"Nothing yet. But he's coming back."

"Persistent beggar!" muttered David. Then in a voice which he tried to make soft, he said: "Of course she will take him."

"We none of us know."

David burst out vehemently: "Well, make this plain to the child, for I can't trust myself to speak about it — She must not refuse him on my account." He became more agitated. "Do you understand? Dear as she is to me, dearer every day, and closer, I won't have her light put out because I'm in darkness. To keep that radiant creature tied to a cripple — God! What a thought!"

"Has she given no hint to you?"

"No; that is my fault. I showed my dislike to Middleton too plainly. Oh, he's one of the best, no

doubt, but I couldn't have cottoned to an archangel that wanted my Mollie."

Meantime, the work on the oratorio continued slowly and laboriously. Upon the new score was lavished all of David's science and art, but the higher inspiration was lacking. And, by night and day, he complained of the gadfly tormentings of musical-comedy tunes.

"I can't get rid of them," he said furiously. "They keep the themes I want at bay."

Two days later he broke down, and was forced to take to his bed, racked by neuralgic pains which assailed the back of his eyes and his spine. The doctor in attendance prescribed absolute rest.

In a gust of futile rage, David commanded Mollie to tear up what had been so laboriously transcribed. But Mollie refused. Her patience and good temper never failed; and the simple Gallic gaiety which makes much out of little brightened even the darkest hours. She devised absurd games, and each day published a long chronicle of the doings in the family. Pignerol called her, *ma bonne petite gazette*. To him and to everybody else it became evident that she was indeed the light of her father's eyes. Her presence, her touch, her laugh exercised an extraordinary influence over David, and, perhaps, the knowledge that she alone could comfort and distract him spurred her too willing spirit to even more devoted endeavour.

And, adoring her as he did, David said to himself each day: "I shall lose her — and what then?"

He had been confined to his bed about a week when

the news came of Middleton's appointment, an appointment which — as *The Thunderer* pointed out — was the recognition on the part of the Government of the ablest administrator of his day. David heard from Mollie of this appointment, but he could only guess from the tone of her voice, which was not quite steady, that she was excited and delighted. He asked no questions and contented himself with sending a courteous message of congratulation to be delivered to Middleton upon his arrival. Mollie added that she was expecting him soon. She spoke quite calmly. David was puzzled, divining that she wished to spare his feelings. And, immediately, she had changed the channel of talk from Middleton to himself with an abruptness which aroused suspicion. As she was adjusting a pillow, he caught her head between his hands, and kissed a cheek which he discovered to be wet, although she was laughing at the time. With intensity, David whispered:

“You darling little woman, how happy you are going to make some lucky fellow.”

Mollie, hoping he had not noticed the tell-tale moisture and reflecting that in any case he would believe that pity for his sufferings had made her weep, responded lightly:

“You are the man I want to make happy.”

Next day, she failed to find the morning paper, which she read aloud to David between the hours of ten and eleven. Usually, it lay upon the hall table; but she saw that it had been taken away, and directly

afterward Pignerol appeared with the paper in his hand and a shadow upon his pleasant rosy face.

"Come here," he said gravely.

She followed him into his study.

"A friend of your father's has committed suicide."

"Who, who?"

"Harold Newsom. Read."

The body had been discovered at the bottom of a deep pool in a Scotch river. Upon Newsom's desk was a sheet of paper upon which the unhappy man had set down his reasons for committing suicide. Disappointment, it seemed, had consumed a body never too robust. Confronted by the spectre of an incurable malady, he claimed the right to end a life no longer worth the living. In a short editorial, it was mentioned that his father, the famous iconoclast, had maintained this right emphatically, and in particular where it could be shown that the dragging out of existence imperilled the happiness of others. A dictum of the great man was quoted: "Scrap the worn-out machine!"

Mollie read the editorial, and glanced at her grandfather, who said: "We must keep this from your father. It would distress him greatly."

"Yes," said Mollie.

"It is possible," continued Pignerol, "that this appointment of Middleton's had something to do with the tragedy."

"O!"

"Newsom and Middleton were at Balliol together.

Newsom, so I have always understood, was regarded as the more brilliant man."

"If there was any jealousy behind the act Mr. Middleton will be very unhappy. I had a letter from him this morning."

"A letter?"

"A few lines. He is coming here this afternoon."

Suddenly Pignerol remembered that he had not spoken to Mollie. Hesitatingly, he began: "I have something to say to you, my Molliedkins. Perhaps I shall say it better, if you perch yourself on my lap, as your mother used to do when she was your age."

She blushed, guessing what was coming, and averting her face. Pignerol's voice was very sympathetic as he whispered: "This appointment of Middleton's is a very serious affair — *hein?*"

"Very — for him and others."

"It is of the others I would speak. We have seen how it is with him. It jumps to the eye that he wants you."

"He has not said so," murmured Mollie.

"Because of that I have invited you to sit on my knee. He will speak as soon as he arrives. And then, what will you reply, my child?"

"I don't know," said Mollie nervously; with vehemence, she continued, "I can't leave father."

"Mollie, I am speaking for your father. Perhaps afterward I will say a word for myself. For the moment your father is speaking, not I. The thought of any sacrifice on your part is terrible to him. He

writhes, I tell you, under the possibility of it. And he charged me to tell you this before Middleton arrives."

"He does not like Mr. Middleton."

"Because he doesn't understand him."

"Thank you for that."

"The girl who marries Henry Middleton will be very lucky. If he were poor and obscure I should say the same thing."

Mollie kissed him, and Pingerol knew then that Middleton had not been wasting his time in Sherborne. In a different tone the Professor continued:

"Now I will add my word."

He paused, wondering how it would be received. Was the soil ready for the seed? Then he said softly:

"The thought of sacrifice is not terrible to me."

"Ah!"

"After the fall, sacrifice became necessary. Nobody believes to-day in burnt offerings of sheep and goats, but they represented in patriarchal times a vital opportunity for self-denial. Misdirected energy, my Mollie, can only be redirected aright through sacrifice. When you understand that, you will have the key to the Bible, and to the mysteries which it sets forth in allegory and parable."

"When I was on my way to Blois I prayed that Father might be alive, and I made a sort of covenant."

"A covenant?"

"That if he was spared, I would do anything — anything that might be required."

"You had no idea of what might be required?"

"No."

"And now, to-day, you see two roads, one, perhaps, a broad, easy way, and the other not so easy, not so broad?"

"Yes," she whispered.

"Child, which are you going to take?"

He almost believed that Mary was speaking, when she answered firmly, "I am going to stay with Father."

"So be it," said Pignerol. After a pause he added, "But you must not look back."

"I shall try not to."

"If you try hard enough you will succeed. To look back with regret and sadness, to let your mind dwell upon the broad, easy way, will poison your life and his. But this is certain. To those who choose the narrow path and walk in it serene and hopeful, it broadens day by day, till it becomes in truth the Perfect Way. And the other, unless all human experience is at fault, changes inversely, ever narrowing and darkening till at length we cease to walk upright in it, but slide headlong into bottomless abysses."

Suddenly she clutched him as if afraid.

"You will help me if I stumble."

"Gladly. All the same, I would have you believe that if the energy, the force, lies without, to be had for the asking, still the perception of spiritual truth is within and comes from the Divine within, the God in whose image we were made. By the light within,

Mollie, you will walk bravely along the path you have chosen."

"Father must not know."

"Not yet. Otherwise the sacrifice would be in vain."

They rose, gazing into each other's eyes. It was difficult to believe that the man had lived nearly seventy years and the girl less than twenty. Youth was as conspicuous in Pignerol as in his grandchild: the youth which is immortal, which ever expects and demands greater joys, an ampler life, a wider intelligence, a more vital sympathy.

While Pignerol was talking to Mollie, David lay upon his back thinking of the girl's wet cheek and cursing the darkness that hid her face from him. Was she about to leave him?

Did she love Henry Middleton?

His mind concentrated upon this point of interrogation. If he could look for one instant into her clear eyes, he would know. Because such vision was denied, he rebelled passionately. So Prometheus suffered, and Job.

That afternoon the doctor spoke of an improvement. David laughed grimly.

"What do you mean by improvement? I had a very bad night."

"You have extraordinary vitality, Mr. Archdale."

"Tell me the truth. I lie here knowing that half the time I am being humbugged by kind but well-

meaning friends. Am I likely to make old bones after all?"

"Quite likely."

"I might attain threescore years and ten?"

"With care — yes."

"Other people's care, eh?"

As he put the question, he saw himself being led down the long years. The doctor, accustomed to work in a town, where certain expressions and sentiments were expected of him, added with unction: "You can thank God for an excellent constitution."

"Can I?" said David, derisively.

The worthy doctor reddened.

"I don't say that to humbug you; your constitution is of iron."

"And with care —" David laughed again. "Was there ever a patient of yours who received more care?"

The doctor took part of the compliment to himself; it may be added that he deserved it.

"Mr. Archdale, the care of you is a matter of world-wide importance. I realize my own responsibility, I can assure you. That is why I lay so much stress upon absolute rest."

"Rest?" David laughed again.

"I entreat you to coöperate with us and Nature. I shall look in again to-morrow."

To-morrow!

Yes; and the day after — and the day after that! Out of the gloom they came, these grisly to-morrows; an endless procession of days without light or colour,

each the black counterfeit of its predecessor: dim sentinels lining the perspectives of Time.

"Did you bring the morphia?"

The neuralgia during the previous night had been so severe that an ordinary composing draught failed to alleviate it. Accordingly, at David's request, the doctor had consented to bring a little morphia to be injected hypodermically, if the pain became very acute.

"Yes; but you won't need it."

"Professor Pignerol will administer it, if necessary."

"Very well; I will give it to him. I repeat you are much better. But a chill, the slightest fatigue, an indiscretion in diet, and you would be worse then ever. This is a superb appointment of Mr. Middleton's?"

David smiled, detecting a curious note. The doctor misinterpreted the smile. By this time all Sherborne had guessed the reason of Middleton's presence amongst them.

"That appointment," continued the doctor blandly, "may have something to do with your improvement, which is really very marked. I trust I am not indiscreet, Mr. Archdale. I have girls of my own. The papers say that a peerage will be conferred. The Colonials dearly love a lord. Well, I must be going. By the way, the death of his friend is a very shocking affair, eh?"

"What friend?" asked David, indifferently.

"Harold Newsom, the novelist."

"Harold Newsom? I know him quite well. Dead? How did he die? Confound it! Pignerol must have kept this from me. I'm not a baby. Pray tell me the details."

The doctor did so, not very willingly, for he perceived that he had been indiscreet. David listened. At the end he said slowly: "Poor fellow! He was an unhappy, soured man. He made others unhappy. Perhaps he has done the one thing possible."

"Suicide, unless the mind is deranged, is cowardice."

"Are we to have no pity for cowards?"

"He had a wife and children. What a blow to inflict upon them!"

"They will get over it," said David harshly.

The doctor dismissed the subject with a wave of his hand. As he rose, he said authoritatively: "Remember! We must make haste slowly. Remain in bed! Don't worry! With care all will be well."

He pressed David's hand and hastened away. David laughed. With care all would be well! With care he might attain unto threescore years and ten!

With care!

The word ground itself into his soul. Always he had been more ready to give than to receive. He had entertained, but he had not accepted entertainment in return. Of late years, for instance, other men's music had rather bored him. He was not interested in science. Of sport he knew little. Cards amused him mildly. Because of these ignorances and indifferences he seldom went to other men's houses, although

his own house was called the Archdale Arms. Now, constrained to an enforced inactivity, he was able to compute, perhaps for the first time accurately, what his work had been to him. Without work and without Mollie what would be left? Unutterable weariness of spirit and flesh.

He began to think of Newsom, and tried to remember when he had last seen him. Surely at luncheon at the club. Newsom had held forth afterward upon the eternal topic of self-advertisement and log-rolling. But, behind this — as before — was the exasperating sense of some other meeting which eluded the antennæ of his memory stretching out, hither and thither, feeling for a remembrance really vital. Why were Wrest and Thelluson associated with Newsom?

Presently, Pignerol looked in. Middleton was on his way to Sherborne, and might be expected about tea-time.

“Did you speak to Mollie?” asked David.

“I did,” said Pignerol.

“I hope you made it plain beyond shadow of doubt that any sacrifice on her part would drive me stark mad?”

“I told her that you were writhing at the possibility.”

“Thank you. Why did Mollie and you keep this Newsom matter from me?”

“It was so shocking. I intended to break it to you quietly. Shall I read? Or would you prefer to talk?”

“If you are considering me, go back to your book.

Not being able to work, I can at least console myself with the reflection that I am not making others idle."

He spoke emphatically, and Pignerol saw that he meant it. Accordingly, he went away. David lay upon his back, thinking of Newsom lying at the bottom of some quiet, translucent pool — at rest!

CHAPTER XXI

IN THE GARDEN

MOLLIE was in the garden when Middleton arrived. He came slowly toward her with an expression upon his face not easy to interpret. After the first greeting he sat down saying, in reply to her congratulations:

"It is a great honour and a great responsibility. But I can think of nothing but this affair of Newsom's. He was a friend of mine."

"Yes, I knew." Then she added, "He was a friend of father's."

"We were at Balliol together," said Middleton. "A wonderfully clever fellow. He must have heard of my appointment a few hours before his death. He sent me a telegram unsigned: *Moriturus, te saluto!*"

"What a cruel thing to do!" exclaimed Mollie.

"Cruel? I don't think he meant it that way. Poor fellow! I am so sorry. I let myself drift apart from him."

"I am sure that he drifted from you."

As he looked at her with his steady eyes, she blushed, and to cover her confusion asked hurriedly: "Were you jealous? Did that come between you?"

"Oh, no," replied Middleton simply. "He had all the qualities which I have not. I must have bored him horribly. And now ——"

"The papers spoke of his wife and children. Oh, how could he abandon them?"

"An unselfish motive is assigned."

"You mean because he was ill, broken down?"

"Yes."

Mollie hesitated for a moment; then she said softly: "Do you believe that women only care for a man when he is strong and successful?" As he made no reply, she continued vehemently: "Suppose that another's ill health is the one thing, perhaps the only thing, necessary to develop a woman, to make her what she was intended to be?"

"I had not thought of that," he confessed. "I," he looked at her face, "I should hate to be a burden upon the woman I loved."

"One hears all the strong men that have ever lived repeating that." She laughed, with a mixture of derision and pity, as if she divined that he with his immense experience was grotesquely ignorant upon this particular subject. Then, with a tenderness and humility which thrilled her lover, she whispered: "We do adore strength, but some men make things too easy for the women they love, and then the women become pigs, wallowing in clover and sunshine. I know, because I have wallowed."

"You?"

She nodded. Her hand lay close to his. It was delicately outlined against the stone bench upon which it rested. Middleton stared at it, seeing new beauty in its lines. She wore no rings, and Middleton had

thought of the gems which he would like to buy for that hand. At this moment, he saw it for the first time as the hand of a ministering angel. He imagined it poised above his own head, about to touch a burning forehead. At times he suffered with acute headache. And he told himself that Mollie would charm away pain with a touch of her fingers. He looked at her face, now half turned from his.

She had changed.

It was amazing that this change had escaped his notice. A certain girlish plumpness had vanished. She appeared a woman. The flesh had undergone some refining process. It was impossible, for instance, to conceive of this fair creature as — wallowing!

“I can’t believe it,” he said. “What I can believe, and it has only come to me this instant, is that a man might well accept ill-health or any other misfortune if such a woman as you were at his side to comfort him.”

As she said nothing, he took her hand, and continued quickly: “I have come here, because I want something far, far bigger than any appointment in the Empire. And the bigness of it makes me realize my own smallness. Mollie, dear Mollie, you know what I want, don’t you?”

With her head still averted, she answered, “Yes.”

As she spoke she remembered that upon this bench her father had asked her mother to become his wife. She knew the story of that long and simple courtship, and she had told herself again and again that she in her turn would like to be wooed in a garden, in some

quiet, secluded spot fragrant with associations which still distilled an enchanting essence.

"Mollie, are you going to give me what I want?"

His voice trembled, as his grasp upon her hands tightened. She thrilled and shivered.

"Have I been too abrupt?" he whispered. "I'm a duffer at love-making. You are the first, and when I look at you I feel such a clown. I can wait a little longer, if you are not quite sure."

"You have always wanted me?"

"From the first hour."

"Why, I wonder?"

"Because you are so different to other girls."

Mollie laughed, withdrawing her hand.

"I have something to tell you," she said; "a sort of confession. If you had asked me to marry you when I was with Mrs. Stormont, I should have jumped at such a chance. Different to other girls! Not I. I wanted what you could give me, a big position. I purred to myself when I thought of being called 'Your Excellency.' I thought of the Middleton diamonds and heaps of things, but I didn't think much of you. As for being in love, well, I was in love with myself—head over ears. When you talked to me about your work, I was bored, but I consoled myself with the thought that it engrossed you. Mrs. Stormont hinted rather plainly that a husband with plenty to do generally allowed his wife a free hand."

"Why do you tell me this?"

"I was like that not three months ago, I may become

like that again. Father's accident made me see things in a different light. And my talks here with grandfather and you ——"

"And me?"

"Have driven out some of the imps which possessed me, but they might come back if, if ——"

"If?" He held her glance firmly.

She replied resolutely, "If I married you."

"You refuse to marry me?"

"Yes," she said softly.

"Because you don't care — enough?"

She remained silent, listening to his voice, slightly harsh, and broken by surprise and distress.

"I thought you cared. I swear that I should not have spoken, unless I believed that you cared not for position and money but for me and also for my work. In a sense my work represents me. If my work bores you, you are right to refuse to marry me. But I thought — I hoped — that you were interested, keen."

"I am keen now. I could work with you."

He stared at her despondently and muttered:

"I see. You are too kind to speak the brutal truth. I have not succeeded in inspiring love."

Her silence so puzzled him that he took her face between his hands and said masterfully:

"I want an answer; I must have an answer. Am I personally distasteful to you? Yes or no?"

"N — no."

"You like me? Yes or no?"

"Yes."

"Much — or little?"

"Much."

"Then what on earth stands between us?"

"Father. I can't leave him."

She released herself with dignity.

"I have thought of your father. He could live with us."

"He couldn't."

"In any case I should not dream of asking you to leave him till his health is re-established. And I am sure that he would be the last man in England to keep you tied for ever to him."

"He would not tie me. I shall tie myself."

"Very well. Let us become engaged. I can wait. I have waited for everything worth while which has come to me."

He tried to draw her to him, but she resisted. When his strength seemed likely to prevail, she murmured: "Don't make things too hard. An engagement is impossible. If Father suspected that I cared, it would be terrible, because then he would say to himself that he was keeping me from you. I cannot argue about it. Father must be made to believe that you have asked me to be your wife, and that I have refused you. You must go back to London to-night, and please, please, don't come to see me before you go abroad, and don't write!"

As she spoke, hurriedly, with downcast eyes, and cheeks whose colour betrayed her, Henry Middleton understood. And at that moment he knew that the

ultimate issue lay with him, not with her. If he chose, he could entice her from what she conceived to be her duty. The temptation to do so assailed him with tremendous violence. Words came to his lips — specious arguments — wherewith to tear to tatters her resolution. She was at his mercy. And, behind this, surged the sense of the injustice to himself. She was young; she could wait; but he was middle-aged; and every year, every month counted. He had made so sure of her. A hot flush coloured his too pale face when he remembered that he had hinted to the Prime Minister concerning the possibility — he was guarded in all his statements — of finding a wife able to play her part in the great work awaiting him overseas. His Chief, who was also his personal friend, had said bluntly that he hoped it would be so.

Mollie may have divined what was passing through his brain, for suddenly she made a gesture of protest; a tiny shrug of the shoulders, which revealed pathetically her youth and weakness and inexperience.

Middleton, on the edge of speech, hesitated. Not the least of his gifts was the power to see both sides of a question. In the House, again and again, he had triumphed by setting forth with admirable lucidity and sincerity the case for his opponents, demonstrating with every word he uttered how carefully he had considered the opinions and facts which governed them. Because of this he had been chosen to fill an appointment which exacted special understanding of and sympathy with conditions alien to those under which

Anglo Saxons live and prosper. In brief, he not only knew, but acted upon, the conviction that the meat of one might be poison to another.

He saw clearly that Mollie was obeying her instinct and conscience. To impose upon her his ideas, however sane and logical, would be cruel and dangerous; for in all moral exigencies he scrupulously respected points of view other than his own. And he had faith — which accounted for much in his career — that in the end conscience justified itself. He had always maintained the infallibility of the “still small voice.” In and out of season he proclaimed the necessity of acting according to one’s lights, whether that light was an arc lamp or a farthing dip.

He took Mollie’s hand, kissed it, and walked out of the garden. It was characteristic of the man that he did not look back.

CHAPTER XXII

THROUGH THE MISTS

AS SOON as Middleton had left the garden, Mollie hastened to her room, which was next to David's, and divided from it by a thin lath-and plaster partition. She moved lightly, but not quite noiselessly; and by this time David's hearing had become extraordinarily acute. He knew that she had been with Middleton, and he was sure that the man who had succeeded in everything undertaken would succeed in the greatest enterprise of all. It was unthinkable that such a personage would hazard a refusal.

During the past hour, David had wrestled, even as Jacob, and like him in the darkness, for that immeasurable blessing, the sense of his relation to what was Highest within him, which told him that he must accept Mollie's marriage not only with resignation but in a spirit which would enhance her happiness. Pignerol had enlightened him concerning Middleton. David, in short, was alive to the fact that if Mollie was Middleton's complement, Middleton, in even greater degree, was the best possible husband for her. Pignerol had laid emphasis on this, hoping thereby to make the separation more tolerable to the father.

David heard the door of Mollie's room close, and

then the click of a turned lock. A silence followed, broken by a faint sob. Immediately, David sat up, and the swift movement brought back the pain in the spine. So acute was the attack that he gasped. Clenching his teeth, he slipped out of bed, and tried to grope his way to the partition. He came to the open window. Here he was obliged to halt, for the pain had become excruciating. The sweat was pouring off him. He inhaled greedily the fresh evening air. As he did so his attentive ear caught once more an attenuated sob, peculiarly muffled. Evidently Mollie's window was open also. David leaned out of the casement. After a few minutes he knew that his child was lying upon her bed in a paroxysm of weeping, whose violence she was attempting to mitigate by pressing her face against a pillow. David crawled back, forgetful of his own pain, sensible only of Mollie's suffering, Mollie, whom he had always regarded as the most joyous creature in the world. He had not conceived the possibility of her suffering like this. For this was what he had suffered, the pangs of the mind fiercer and more agonizing than the pangs of the body.

What had happened?

He leapt hot-foot to the conclusion that Middleton had come and gone without speaking; he had made this young girl love him, and at the last moment had dropped her, because in her youth and inexperience she might be deemed unfit to become the wife of a mighty proconsul. Let it be remembered that David

was desperately ill, with a mind and memory unhinged by racking pains.

His impotence served to increase his bewilderment and rage. He desired to go to his daughter, but he couldn't. He asked himself why she had not come to him; and, very miserably, he realized that his lack of sympathy, not hers, kept them apart.

Some time must have elapsed when he heard her door open, and then the familiar footfall upon the old oak boards of the passage. He heard her tap upon the door. Ah! he had misjudged her! She had spared him the first outburst of grief, but now she was coming to him, for the comfort which he yearned to give. Never had she been so close, so dear, as at this instant when, having ministered faithfully to him, she was about to demand like solace at his hands.

"Come in," he said softly.

She entered, kissed him, and felt his arms tighten about her body. She thought to herself: "Does he fear that I'm going to leave him again?" Aloud, she said quietly: "Father, Mr. Middleton has just asked me to be his wife."

"Good God!" exclaimed David. For the moment, he was too dazed to understand anything except the bare words. Had she been crying because she divined the price that he must pay for her happiness? Unable to speak, he heard her continue in the same quiet, tender tone: "I have sent him away."

"Why?" he gasped. "Is he in such a hurry to get back to his work?"

"I can't marry him. Don't you understand?" She laughed, so naturally that David would have been deceived had he not heard her muffled sobs. "I'm much too fond of my daddy to leave him."

"You have refused Henry Middleton?" muttered David.

"Yes. Of course, I feel highly honoured. And I had to tell him that only a few months ago I would have married him for his money and position ——"

"You told him that?"

"It is perfectly true. I respect him enormously, but he's nearly old enough to be my father. He never gave me a chance before. Of course, I am very sorry for him. But I shall never marry except for love."

David almost said, "Will you swear to me that you don't love this man?" For he knew that she loved him. And with this knowledge he knew also that she would not hesitate to lie, if a lie became necessary. He could not force a lie upon her. He muttered instead:

"I thought you would take him, child."

"Because I knew you thought so, I couldn't speak about Mr. Middleton. Will you forgive me?"

Then she laughed again, very lightly, because she was thinking of her cleverness and daring as a skater over the thinnest ice.

"So he has gone?" said David.

"Yes."

"When does he leave England?"

"In about a fortnight. I ——" her voice never faltered; she finished a sentence gallantly: "I begged

him not to come back, and not to write. He's a proud man. He won't. Father, what's the matter?"

"I am in great pain," he answered.

"Oh, dear! Has it come back?"

"Yes; I must fight the devilish thing alone. Tell your grandfather to bring up the morphia after dinner. I can't face another night of this."

Left alone, the wrestling began again, a devastating civil war between body and soul. The neuralgia became more acute, as he struggled in the darkness to see some light, however faint, which might guide him out of this wilderness. Newsom had found a way, and if there was any justification for Newsom, was there not ten times as much for him? He stood between Mollie and happiness. Nevertheless, he knew that his self-destruction would destroy Mollie's happiness. The doctor had said that life lingered long when the desire to live was predominant. David remembered that from the moment when he had fully regained consciousness and realization of his condition he had resolved to live to produce his best work. Was it possible that this overmastering passion had kept body and soul together? And if, now, he desired as passionately to die, would not that desire find fulfilment? The doctor had imposed conditions. But he was in no wise bound to accept them.

- Mollie had dissembled with him; he would dissemble with her. How easy and simple to disobey the doctor. He had done so already. Bathed in sweat, he had remained by an open window. His throbbing

head and hot dry hands told him that mischief had been accomplished.

When Pignerol came upstairs, he found him suffering excruciating pain. The Professor administered a medium dose of morphia, which took effect immediately. David said, "What a wonderful drug!" and as he spoke the lines of pain seemed to melt out of his face, leaving it smooth and placid. He sank back upon his pillow smiling; and the smile lingered after he had fallen asleep. Pignerol sat down beside the bed, gazing at the fine head upon the pillow, believing with deep conviction that he could help this sorely stricken soul, not yet knowing how such help could be transmitted, but assured that a way would be found. He attempted to compose his mind with a view of making it recipient to any message from the Divine Energy and Wisdom within and without. After long practice he had acquired a power of sensitizing himself into a condition of hypnosis. Upon such occasions he generally ended by falling into a refreshing sleep, from which he awakened conscious of renewed vitality and intelligence.

To-night he failed to compose his mind. And the thoughts which he tried to repel assailed him with such persistence that finally he admitted himself vanquished, and allowed them undisputed dominion. He was wise and modest enough to believe that inasmuch as these thoughts concerned David they might have invaded him with definite purpose. Moreover, they presented themselves in order, with a continuity super-

latively interesting and exciting. The first thought embodied itself in the profound regret that David's memory of his best work had become intermittent and inconsequent, a mere mutilated fragment of a once splendid whole. From this Pignerol passed to a consideration of other fragments of remembrance concerning the period when David's life was suspended. These ranged themselves in his mind: the recollection of two peasants, the finding of the pocket-book, the placing of the bodies in the cart, the visit to the club, and the still more extraordinary experience in Mollie's bedroom. Pignerol had never doubted that a remarkable psychical experience had taken place. Granting this, the question arose: could such an experience be explained scientifically, or did it transcend human understanding? He decided that this depended upon the evidence concerning David's condition after the accident. If, as had been believed, David did die, then the fact of his return to life was overwhelmingly transcendent: a miracle comparable only to Christ's resurrection. If, on the other hand, life had been merely suspended, Pignerol's own observations and researches would establish the journeyings of the spirit as one more instance amongst scores of similar spiritual excursions with which every psychologist was familiar.

The conclusion was inevitable that David's death, if he had died, could never be proved. Sarthe, after exhibiting the usual tests, had pronounced David to be dead. Now he was as emphatic in asserting that

he had not died. Sarthe, with materialistic views, could adopt no other position.

Pignerol turned to confront another speculation. Waiving the impossibility of demonstrating the undemonstrable, it was worth while to attempt to divine the reason of David's return. David believed that he had come back to produce "Solomon's Garden." And well might any intelligent man believe that reason to be adequate. Nevertheless, the fact obtruded itself that "Solomon's Garden" might not be produced. As salient was the change in Mollie. Was it, therefore, justifiable to assume that the real reason of poor David's extended lease of life was other than what he deemed it to be?

Afterward, Pignerol admitted that these thoughts and speculations may have engrossed him for an hour. And then he made a second attempt to compose his mind, always with the same end in view of making it recipient to some message. He fell asleep, waking suddenly to find David sitting up in bed with his sightless eyes wide open and shining with a curiously alert and perceptive expression. Pignerol admits that he overlooked the fact of David's blindness. Hardly awake himself, with his own sensibilities focussed upon David's face, he forgot what had passed before he fell asleep, forgot that David was under the influence of morphia, and without reflection, as if in obedience to some imperative command, addressed David by name.

David answered at once:

"Yes?"

The monosyllable was interrogative, as if the speaker expected to be asked questions.

At this moment Pignerol knew that David was under the influence of a drug whose peculiar properties are not yet wholly understood, and he perceived as instantly that the morphia had awakened David's mind.

"Can you see me?"

"Yes," said David.

He spoke in his ordinary voice, but Pignerol noticed an inflection of positiveness.

"What sort of jacket am I wearing?"

"Your old smoking-coat."

Pignerol thrust his hand into the pocket of the coat. He carried notebooks in all his coats. Furtively, he slipped a notebook onto his knees and opened it. David's eyes never left his, and it was impossible for him to see the notebook, supposing that he was not blind.

"What have I got on my knees?"

"A notebook."

"Just so. I'm going to ask you a few questions, David, and I shall take down your replies."

"Certainly."

At this moment Mollie softly opened the door. Pignerol looked round, with his fingers upon his lips; then he signed to Mollie to sit down. As she passed him she whispered: "I heard voices. Why does father look so odd?"

"He is in a trance."

She sat down behind the shaded lamp. Pignerol asked the first vital question.

"Do you remember the accident to the car?"

"Perfectly."

"What happened immediately afterward?"

Pignerol set down in shorthand his own questions and David's answers. In the shadows Mollie sat, elbows on knees, leaning forward with her head between her hands and an expression of amazement upon her face.

"I found myself standing near the car. Then I discovered that father was dead; then I discovered that I was dead."

"You are quite sure that you were dead?"

"Of course I was dead."

Pignerol paused, knowing the importance of controlling his feelings. Any manifestation of them might awaken David, perhaps to his injury, and most certainly to the ruin of this experience.

"Can you tell me what happened after you realized that you were dead?"

"Yes."

"Try to tell me everything."

David obeyed. His voice, quiet, clear, slightly monotonous, never faltered. The story which he told has been set down already. It was taken, indeed, from Pignerol's notebook, and modified in form only. From beginning to end Pignerol's pencil followed the amazing narrative. David never paused; and Pignerol dared not interrupt him. Afterward, he thought

of questions he might have asked. At the time he was sensible only of a conviction that David was describing minutely and accurately personal experiences which must have happened.

When he had finished the recital, concluding with his lapse into unconsciousness, David's eyes closed; his head sank back upon the pillow; he breathed gently, like a child asleep.

Pignerol beckoned Mollie to follow him into the passage. There he whispered: "We can leave him; he will sleep for some hours, five or six at least. Come to my room."

They went downstairs.

"Was he delirious?" asked Mollie.

"No."

He saw that Mollie was trembling. Tenderly, he placed her in a chair, sat down beside her, and said softly: "A very wonderful experience has just taken place, so wonderful that I can hardly realize it. I shall reread aloud these notes."

When he finished, Mollie said eagerly, "It is true?"

"Part of it we know is true," replied Pignerol.

"It is true that upon the night of the accident I was reading a vile book, it is true that I was thinking of nothing except myself, of how much I could grab, of the splash that I might make? And if that part is true, isn't it all true? Why do you not answer?"

"The utterances of persons in the hypnotic trance are worthless as evidence. That has been proved. If I had said to your father, 'You are John Sebastian

Bach,' he would have replied, 'Yes, I am.' He knows about Bach, and believing himself to be Bach, he would have described with accuracy what he had read about Bach's life. On the other hand, had I imposed upon him the conviction that he was, let us say, Themistocles, then his description would have been inaccurate, because he has never studied Greek history. Your father, in a state of suspended animation, may have witnessed the picking up of his body. I do not doubt that he did. He may have made this astonishing pilgrimage to England; he may have looked into your heart. But —" He paused, before he continued in a different voice: "If the rest is true, if he did cross to the other side, why, then, a new knowledge concerning things hitherto unseen carries us on and upward to heights I cannot measure."

"I believe that father died," said Mollie fervently. "From the bottom of my soul I believe it."

Pignerol kissed her. And then he locked up the notebook. If the record was true, David, as a disembodied spirit, had returned to earth for the sole purpose of cleansing his daughter's soul. The production of the oratorio had not been considered.

The wonder of the matter to a man whose leisure had been spent in the endeavour to find a scientific reason behind phenomena which to-day we rightly term supernatural rather than supernatural, lay in the fact that David's mission had been accomplished so far as Mollie was concerned, and accomplished without conscious effort on the father's part. Pignerol did not

doubt that Mollie would advance upon the narrow path till it widened into a fairway. Trials and tribulations would beset her. But she would go on. Of that he felt assured. And with this conviction illuminating his mind, he concentrated his thought upon the father still struggling with earthly ambitions, still enmeshed in the nets of his own spinning.

“When will you tell father?”

“You must leave that responsibility to me.”

CHAPTER XXIII

THE AWAKENING

MOLLIE returned to her father's room, and ^vsat down beside his bed. His expression had not changed: the smile remained inexpressibly tender and serene; the lines traced by pain upon his face seemed to have vanished.

Presently Mollie knelt down to pray that the faith which flamed in her might never be extinguished, and with the reiteration of the prayer she became sensible of an oppression in the atmosphere. When she rose from her knees, she discovered that there was a reason for this. A storm impended. She went to the window and opened it wide. Outside, the air was stagnant and heavy; Sherborne seemed to sleep beneath the spell of an uncanny silence. The room overlooked the garden, and Mollie could just see the tower of the Abbey Church black against a darkening sky. Lightning flared to the right of Honeycomb Hill; and after many seconds a distant peal of thunder indicated that a storm was approaching from the south-west. The second and third flashes were more vivid; the thunder followed quicker. Mollie wondered whether the noise would awaken her father; but he lay still, so still that she leaned over him with the fear tearing at her heart

that he might be dead. To her relief he breathed as placidly as a child.

She returned to the window.

Ever since she could remember, she had been afraid of storms. As the thunder roared louder she experienced the familiar terror, the desire to hide, to rush to her own room, to bury her head beneath thick blankets. For the first time she fought this impulse, remaining at the window, pale and trembling. The storm was increasing in violence and likely to burst with fury upon the town. So far it had been accompanied by neither wind nor rain.

She hoped that Pignerol would come to her, but she remembered with a qualm that he was the soundest of sleepers. He boasted that thunder never disturbed him.

At this moment she reflected that the storm would put to the test her newly formed resolutions. Had she not promised her grandfather that she would walk upon her self-appointed path — serenely?

Thunder and lightning began to crash and flash simultaneously. Mollie's hands went halfway to her eyes. Then, with a tremendous effort her arms fell and she stared valiantly into the darkness and silence. The lightning seemed to strike the pinnacles of the tower; the thunder pealed unceasingly. Then the wind rushed down in fury, shrieking through the trees in the garden. Five minutes later the masses of black cloud were rent asunder and a tropical rain descended in torrents.

The storm passed.

David still slept. From the wet garden rose the penetrating smell of earth and the fragrance of crushed herbs. The stars shone with steadier radiance. And into Mollie's soul flowed the glad sense of triumph, of a victory over the flesh. The storm had strengthened her. Its terrors were put to flight, never to return.

She left the window. Gazing at David, she thought of her mother, now so wonderfully alive, such an unbreakable link between the here and the hereafter. Mary had sent back David to save her!

The hours glided by, for Mollie was on an amazing journey, beholding through her father's eyes that other side in which hitherto she had taken but the vaguest and most shadowy interest. Now, in panoramic splendour, it was revealed, no mirage, but eternal substance.

Dawn was breaking when David woke. To the left of Jerusalem Hill a silvery line transmuted itself into gold. Mollie, more alive than she had ever been to the significance of a new day, stood beside her father. As the lids of his sightless eyes raised themselves, she took his hand. He murmured her name.

"I am here," she answered.

He said slowly, "I've had a wonderful dream."

"A dream," she repeated softly.

"I saw your mother; I heard her voice. I went to her; she has never come to me, Mollie."

"Tell me about your dream."

He did not answer. A frown settled upon his forehead; the lines deepened about his mouth and eyes.

Then he said wearily: "I heard music, the music I want, but it has gone." At the end of a long pause he added feebly, "There is nothing — nothing."

She kissed him and asked if he was in pain.

"The pain has gone too," he replied in a firmer voice. "But I'm tired, worn out. What time is it? When did you come in?"

"I have been here all night."

"Then you must lie down at once. Perhaps I shall sleep again, go back to my dreams. Leave me, child."

She went to Pignerol's room, and told him that David remembered nothing.

Throughout that day and the next he remained in a condition of exhaustion, taking little nourishment, but, fortunately, suffering no pain. He never mentioned the oratorio.

Upon the third day Pignerol said to the doctor: "Can you account for this condition of apathy and indifference?"

The doctor replied irritably: "I don't like it. That sort of thing indicates extreme debility. His vitality, you understand, justified a favourable prognosis, but now his vitality is failing. The artistic temperament is hard to deal with. If he could be interested in something apart from this confounded music!"

"I know of something," said Pignerol slowly — "a communication which I must make soon. It is unconnected with his music, and it might, it must rouse him."

"Then the sooner you make it the better."

Pignerol waited another twenty-four hours. And then David himself offered an opportunity. He said resignedly: "I am sliding out of life; I know it. It will be a blessed release for you, for Mollie, and for me. My God, how tired I am! And if I could find rest, even if it meant extinction for ever and ever, I should be satisfied. All to-day I have been thinking of poor Newsom at the bottom of that pool. I am sinking as he did, down, down, down — to the bottom of everything. When I reach the bottom my only hope is that I may stay there."

Pignerol put his hand into his pocket.

"David," he said, very solemnly, "how blind you are!"

"Blind — yes. I envy you your faith. What seems to have been revealed to you has not been revealed to me."

"Are you sure of that? Think well."

"I have had dreams. That's all."

"Dreams?" he repeated. "Perhaps life here is only a dream, a nightmare to many. You have dreamed all your life, David; now you are about to wake up."

Something in his tone, a deep solemnity and impressiveness, startled David. He said quickly:

"Wake up? What do you mean?"

Pignerol answered the question. From time to time, as he read aloud what had been set down, exclamations burst from David's lips. Otherwise the recital

was not interrupted. When Pignerol had finished, he perceived that David was too moved to speak. He lay impassive, with eyes shut, but from beneath the heavy lids tears trickled down his wasted cheeks. Then his hand, lying upon the counterpane, sought Pignerol's, and the first words fluttered from his lips.

"You believe this to be true?"

"I do."

"I came back on Mollie's account?"

"Yes."

"And in my blind folly I thought that I was spared to produce 'Solomon's Garden'."

"You were spared to turn a wilderness into a garden, You looked into Mollie's soul and saw weeds of your planting. If you could look again, what a change you would perceive. My son, if the lesser triumph of producing a masterpiece is to be denied to you, will not this infinitely greater triumph suffice?"

There was a long silence, during which the genius in David Archdale revealed itself: the uprush of all that was finest in his real self. Through the darkness which had obscured the colours and forms which he had been privileged to transpose into lovely harmonies, he saw the real Solomon's Garden, the Caanan of perfect Love into which he in this life would not enter. And at the same moment he realized that the setting forth in music of what he saw might be accomplished by him, but not here or now. In his glorious youth he had come within measurable distance of such a triumph. Worn out, blind, beset by mocking echoes

of music unworthy of his best powers, was he physically or mentally able to rehabilitate himself with the energy, the vitality, the endurance which such a labour would exact? Sorrowfully he told himself that this was his just and inevitable punishment. The burning of the score by his own hand, unwittingly, had but foreshadowed this conscious burnt offering of ambition and hope. Humbly he bowed his head and answered Pignerol:

“It will suffice.”

After another silence he spoke again, and his voice was stronger.

“Why do you speak so authoritatively of Mollie’s triumph?”

“You have quick perceptions, David. Can’t you guess what Mollie has sacrificed for you?”

“I know that she loves Henry Middleton.”

“How did you know?”

David explained. At the end he said faintly: “I must be alone. I cannot see Mollie yet. God have mercy on me for a blind, selfish fool!”

Pignerol rose, gazing at David’s face. Then he bent down and whispered:

“‘Let thy soul walk softly in thee as a saint in Heaven unshod;
For to be alone with silence is to be alone with God.’”

CHAPTER XXIV

THE HEAVENLY NOTE

BEFORE many days had passed, it became evident that David's strength of body was not coming back, although his mind seemed to gain power and lucidity. The neuralgia vanished. To satisfy what the doctor spoke of as a "public demand," a famous consultant was called in. He admitted, reluctantly, that nothing could be done. The shock of the accident, apart from the injuries to the head and limbs, must have affected the heart, whose action was failing. After the consultation David said:

"So I shan't make old bones after all?"

The doctors exchanged a sharp glance. Before either had time to answer, David added: "I am glad it is so. Shall I have to wait long?"

"Not very long, I think," replied the great man.

They went away, and Mollie came to him. During the next hour David talked of Mary. Out of the shadows of the past she emerged once more, a flesh-and-blood reality.

Presently David repeated what the consultant had said. Then, with a smile which Mollie could not interpret, he added quickly: "What a pity it is that I can't see you happily married before I go!"

Mollie made no reply, not daring to speak. David continued:

"You won't mourn for me, child?"

"Father!"

"You must know that I am happier than I have ever been since your mother left me."

"I do know that."

"You believe that it is well with me?"

"Yes, yes."

"Because of that you mustn't grieve."

"I shall try not to," she answered unsteadily, still staring at the smile upon David's lips.

Two days afterward, Middleton arrived, and was shown into David's room. Mollie had no idea what was about to happen. As soon as David felt the grasp of Middleton's hand he said eagerly:

"Have you got the license?"

"Yes."

"Everything is arranged?"

"Everything."

"Mollie does not know. If she should think that I have forced her hand, you will remind her that she dissembled with me. This is my little revenge: a Roland for her Oliver. The Professor has managed admirably.

"Yes."

"You sail next week. She will soon join you. At this moment she is in the garden, gathering flowers for her own wedding. Tell her that you have come

here to marry her, and that I am going to have the great pleasure of giving her to you."

"How generous you have been!"

"Mollie will explain my generosity. My own married life was happy, but it might have been happier if I had realized how tremendously the so-called little things count. But, if you can't skim all the cream you want, don't let disappointment sour the milk that is left. I skimmed the cream, and it disagreed with me. Looking back, I see that my triumphs were so small. Lying here, I think of the touch of my wife's hand, the smile that never failed, the voice that was always kind. Those were her triumphs, and I hardly saw them through the mist of my own ambitions. But they carried her from Earth to Heaven. Mollie will tell you how I have come to know that those who are faithful in small things do enter into the joy of the Lord, here and hereafter."

The marriage took place next day, in David's room, beside his bed. Once Mollie had dreamed of a gorgeous ceremony in Westminster Abbey. But this covenant, ratified in the presence of a dying man, and by reason of that divested of aught that might distract the mind from its spiritual significance, became indeed a solemn, ineffaceable sacrament.

Soon after the ceremony, Middleton was obliged to return to London, where affairs not to be neglected nor postponed claimed his undivided attention. Mollie remained with her father.

He lingered longer than was expected. The last days were passed in a serene tranquillity of body and spirit, as if he were sinking out of cloudless skies into a smooth and illimitable ocean. Many old friends came to wish him farewell: the burly Lorimer, the gay Boileau, Daffy-down-Dilly, Thelluson, and Wrest. Each afternoon he was carried into the garden whose flowers were but the symbols of the myriad beautiful thoughts and actions which during long years had interpenetrated it. To David the place was holy ground. Apart from any personal association or experience, it was eloquent of the supreme truth that the infinitely great may be contained in the infinitely small. It lay in a busy city, in it and of it and yet apart from it. Year after year the flowers bloomed and vanished: resolving themselves into other forms of life. Year after year, attacked by weed and blight, they were delivered by faithful hands. The garden seemed to remain the same; but it was not the same, save in its expression of energy rightly directed and controlled. David and Mary had created just such another paradise out of the tiny plot behind their cottage. Afterward, when riches came to them so abundantly, there had been no garden, no sanctuary. And, deprived of it, unable to bloom without it, Mary had wilted and passed away. She might have lived, if a garden had been provided. David remembered what she had said about the rich entering the heaven that is on earth, which may be described, perhaps, as the garden of the soul. He thought of world-famous gardens, the epitome of all that science and art and

wealth can achieve, wherein wander scores of restless, uneasy men and women. Truly the rich have no sanctuaries because they bring their cares into them.

Concerning this David said a few words to Mollie. Middleton had sent to his wife a string of fine pearls which she placed in her father's hands, so that he might feel their size and texture. Presently she saw a shadow of a frown upon his forehead.

"You are not in pain?"

"No. But I'm trying to see you as a great lady. I'm thinking of 'Her Excellency!' Your life, Mollie, will be filled to the brim with excitements and activities; but Henry and you must have a sanctuary into which you can go alone. And in it think sometimes of my 'Solomon's Garden'."

"I have thought of it already as that."

He smiled, as if he could see the garden.

The end came upon a cloudless afternoon in mid-October. Few leaves had fallen from the trees, and the air in the garden was warm and fragrant, as if summer still lingered, loath to leave the place and the people. Pignerol had been reading to David and Mollie passages from his book, a study of the seen mounting step by step into the empyrean of the unseen, and including a consideration of the human personality after death.

When Pignerol finished reading, David said: "After I am gone I should like my wonderful experience to be

given to the world, but let it be set forth anonymously. It would hurt Mollie if I am spoken of as a blind visionary; a few may accept my story as true, and think what it will mean to them."

"Yes," said Pignerol. "And the thought of the few to-day becomes the talk of the many to-morrow." Then turning over a page of his manuscript he read aloud: "'The great awakening has come to some of us, the knowledge that death involves no change whatever. We carry hence the same desires, the same ambitions; we make here our future heaven or hell, and we find it there when we pass over.'"

David shivered.

"Are you cold, father? Shall we go indoors?"

"Not yet."

She noticed that his voice was weaker, and the blood ebbed from his face.

"I descended into hell," he murmured, "and then I ascended into heaven."

He lay silent, but Pignerol noticed that his breathing had become laboured. He touched David's wrist; the pulse fluttered and stopped, and then fluttered again. Pignerol glanced at Mollie and made a sign.

"Listen!" said David.

He had opened his eyes. They were still limpidly blue, the eyes of the boy who had sung anthems in the Abbey Church.

"Do you hear anything?"

They listened. From without the garden floated the familiar sounds of the ancient town: a boy's laugh,

the rattle of a cart, the twittering of the sparrows, the hum of voices in the street.

“What do you hear?” asked Mollie.

“The heavenly note.”

Then, in a loud, clear, joyous tone, he exclaimed:

“Mary!”

He struggled to sit up, extending both his arms, looking straight into the sun. Involuntarily, Mollie followed that swift glance; and at the same moment David's head fell back upon the pillow.

THE END

14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED
LOAN DEPT.

This book is due on the last date stamped below, or
on the date to which renewed.

Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

LIBRARY USE

MAY 26 1959

REC'D LD

MAY 26 1959

SENT ON ILL

AUG 12 1996

U. C. BERKELEY

LD 21A-50m-9,'58
(6889s10)476B

General Library
University of California
Berkeley



